महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK 15

THE COMPLETE
ASRAMAVASIKA PARVA

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Āśramavāsika Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK FIFTEEN

The Complete Āśramavāsika Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. St. Xavier's Lifetime Professor of Excellence award, 2005. Conferred Doctorate of Literature by University of Calcutta in 2006 for "literary scholarship, specially the seminal English transcreation of the Mahābhārata." Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lāl began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 350 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live, are available from WW.

Preface

Finally, the skeletons tumble out of the Hastināpura palace cupboards. The Kurukṣetra dharma-kṣetra battle is over; for fifteen years rājā Yudhiṣṭhira expiates his *pāpa* by attending to every need and comfort of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī. But Bhīma stares balefully at his uncle Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra is made very much aware of Bhīma's displeasure. So much so that Dhṛtarāṣṭra decides to practise *vana-vāsa* tapasyā, and pass his last days in *vāna-prastha* frugality and renunciation in a *tapovana* forest āshram.

All's not well in the state of Hastināpura – O cursèd spite! that ever Dharma was born to set it right. The ṛṣi Māṇḍavya's curse makes makes Dharma take birth as Vidura, the out-of-wedlock son of Vyāsa by a nameless servant-maid in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's palace. Because Pāṇḍu is impotent (and as a result of a curse doomed to perish while indulging in sexual intercourse with his second, glamorous wife Mādrī), by the traditional custom of *niyoga* the younger brother-in-law – Vidura – fathers Yudhiṣṭhira on Kuntī. Since Vidura is Dharma, Yudhiṣṭhira is known as Dharma-putra. But this cannot be openly acknowledged, because Vidura is a low-caste Kṣattā, and his son cannot lay legitimate claim to the throne of Hastināpura. It's a secret well kept by Kuntī, Vidura and Yudhiṣṭhira – that is, until the Āsramavāsika Parva. Vidura decides to fast to death. Before dying, he infuses his yoga-energy into Yudhiṣṭhira, in accordance with the father-son ritual observance at the funeral pyre ordained by tradition. Yudhiṣṭhira is already *de facto* king of Hastināpura; Dhṛtarāṣṭra is in a *vana-vāsa* āshram; Duryodhana is safely dead; fifteen years have passed. Vyāsa reveals the best kept secret to whoever wishes to listen to his mahā-kavyā.

The other "secret" that slips out is Kuntī's confession before her father-in-law Vyāsa when he asks her if she wants any boon granted to her. She does – she wants to see her first-born son Karṇa, whom she abandoned as a baby, revived and reconciled; she wants her conscience pacified. But she gives a very strange explanation to justify her "misbehaviour" for floating away baby Karṇa on the Aśva river. She says she wanted Karṇa's father Sūrya to be spared ṛṣi Durvasas's threatened curse. This does not tally with her earlier explanations – certainly not with what she said to Karṇa when she implored him to spare the lives of her sons. Nowhere in the *Mahābhārata* do we get to know the real reason for Kuntī behaving the way she did as an erring teenager in her adopted father Kuntī-bhoja's palace.

Last of all, the greatest "secret". It is about time Vyāsa told us what his grand epic is all about. Is it artha, dharma, kāma, or mokṣa? We are in the 15th parva; in the 18th parva, the last, he lifts his arms and shouts, complaining that no one pays attention to dharma which is the real source of kāma and artha. Which dharma – sva-dharma, kula-dharma, yuga-dharma, or sanātana dharma? You can practise only one at any given time. Vyāsa does not tell us how to choose. Kāma has two meanings: love or lust. Artha means wealth; it also means meaning – that is, the meaning of wealth. Which meaning does Vyāsa want us to accept? A very disturbing śloka is actually spoken by him to "console" Kuntī [30:24]

सर्वं बलवतां पथ्यं
सर्वं बलवतां शुचि ।
सर्वं बलवतां धर्मः
सर्वं बलवतां स्वकम् ॥

"The path of the powerful is always right.
Everything connected with the powerful is always pure.
Everything the powerful do, is pure.
Everything there is, belongs to the powerful."

Is Vyāsa beeing truthful – or merely cynical? Is the *Mahābhārata* only an epic about power? Simone Weil has an excellent study of Homer's *I liad* as "a poem of force". In the Vana Parva, the Yakṣa – who is Dharma in disguise – questions Yudhiṣṭhira, on pain that if he answers wrongly his brothers will remain dead (they have drunk the poisoned water of life, as we all have). The last question is: "What is the path?" Yudhiṣṭhira answers: "What great men have followed – that is the path." The Yakṣa gives him full marks.

But what does Yudhiṣṭhira mean by "great men"? The Sanskrit is mahā-jana. A mahājana can be a mahātmā, like Gandhi-ji. But the word mahājana also means entrepreneur, merchant, trader, capitalist. Who and what is Yudhiṣṭhira recommending: gentle ahiṁsā or rapacious commercial exploitation? The sweetness of compassion or the ferocity of passionate power? Was Marx right after all? Does all power proceed from the barrel of a gun?

Vyāsa does not clarify. Only life can teach us. The *Mahābhārata* is a signpost, not a destination.

Kolkata
February 2007



Dedication

This *parva* is dedicated
to a commited group
of Vyāsa *bhaktas*
who have sensitively participated
in the 360 weekly Sunday sessions so far
of my *Mahābhārata* reading
at the G.D. Birla Sabhagar in Kolkata
since October 1999
and provided critical inputs
and illuminating insights
during the question-and-answer segment
thereby becoming over a seven-year period
more like members of an intimate family *goṣṭhī*
than an audience at a literary meet.

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīm Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

SECTION ONE

1 "After regaining their kingdom (asked Janamejaya),
how did the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
my pitāmaha-ancestors, behave
with mahā-ātmaned mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra?

2 Courtiers slain, sons killed, he forlorn,
how did rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra behave?
And in such a distressful state,
how did illustrious Gāndhārī behave?

3 And for how long did they rule, –
my mahātmā grancestors?
I want to know all this from you
in every detail."

4 Having recovered their kingdom (Vaiśampāyana said),
their enemies all dead,
the Pāṇḍavas gave pre-eminence to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and ruled the land.

5 O incomparable Kaurava!
Devoted to serving Dhṛtarāṣṭra
were Sañjaya, Vidura and wise Yuyutsu,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son by a Vaiśyā maid.

6 The Pāṇḍavas consulted the king
in all matters.
This went on over a span
of fifteen years.

7 The heroes sat always at his feet
and respected his views,
following the example
set by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

8 Dhṛtarāṣṭra would smell their heads affectionately
and grant them approval.
And Kuntibhoja's daughter Kuntī
faithfully followed Gāndhāri.

9 Draupadī and Subhadrā
and the other Pāṇḍava ladies
meticulously attended to the needs
of the two mothers-in-law.

10 Beds and robes and ornaments
and food and drink
and other luxuries deserving of rājās,
in lavish abundance –

11 Were made available by Yudhiṣṭhira,
O mahārāja,
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. Kuntī similarly
pampered her guru-elder Gāndhārī.

12 Vidura and Sañjaya and Yuyutsu,
O Kaurava Janamejaya,
were always at the service
of the old son-bereft ruler-of-men.

13 Droṇa's beloved brother-in-law,
the mahā-Brahmin Kṛpa,
the mahā-bowman,
also diligently served Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

14 And Purāna-ṛṣi *bhagavān* Vyāsa
sat with Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and narrated to him the kathā-chronicles
of deva-ṛṣis, *pitṛs* and rākṣasas.

15 On instructions from Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Vidura supervised
all the activities linked to dharma
and moral conduct.

16 So well-organised was the system
of Vidura
that a minimum of expenditure
brought a maximum of profit.

17 Dhṛtarāṣṭra released many prisoners,
and pardoned those sentenced to death.
No objection to this was voiced
by Dharma's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

18 And when Ambīkā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
proceeded on pleasure trips,
mahā-radiant Kuru-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
attended to his every comfort.

19 *Ārālika*-vegetables sliced with *ārās*,
sūpa-broths and lentils were served,
and *rāga-khāṇḍavika* sweet-and-sour curries,
as before, to Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

20 With never-failing dedication,
Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
made available to Dhṛtarāṣṭra
the costliest robes and garlands.

21 As in the past, *maireya* wine,
pānaka fruit-drinks,
meat dishes and other delicacies
were prepared for Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

22 And all the earth-lords
who visited the kingdom
paid their respects as they did earlier
to the Kaurava-Indra king Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

23 Kuntī and Draupadī,
and the illustrious Sātvati Subhadrā,
the Nāga daughter Ulupī-devī
and Citrāṅgadā,

24 Dhṛṣṭaketu's sister
and Jarāsaṁdha's daughter –
these and other ladies,
O bull-brave hero,

25 Served Subala's daughter Gāndhārī
like dutiful servant-maids.
"See that the son-bereft monarch
never feels desolated" –

26 Was Yudhiṣṭhira's standing instruction
to his brothers.
This serious advice
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira

27 Found favour with all of them
except Bhīmasena.
Never absent from that hero's heart
were the events
of the dice-game that had the approval
of wicked-minded Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

SECTION TWO

1 Pūjā-respected by the Pāṇḍavas,
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Ambikā's son rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
passed his days happily
as he did in the past,
when ṛṣis waited on him.

2 That Kaurava patriarch
made lavish gifts to Brahmins,
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira provided him
with every conceivable facility.

3 Never-indulging-in-malice
was always-affectionate rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
One day this earth-lord
said to his brothers and ministers:

4 "From me and from all of you,
lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra deserves respect.
Whoever wishes him well,
is my well-wisher.

5 Who wishes him ill, is my enemy,
and deserves to be punished.
Whatever needed for śrāddha-karma funeral-rites
for *pitṛs*, for his sons,

6 And for well-wishers he wants performed –
provide him the means."
The mahātmā Kaurava
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra

7 Gifted to Brahmins copiously
according to each one's deserving.
Dharmarājā Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma,
Savyasācī-Arjuna and the twins

8 Spared no effort to gratify
every desire of their ancestor.
That the aged rājā, distraught
with grieving for his slain sons and grandsons,

9 Might die in sheer despair
because of what they did – this haunted them.
That the Kaurava hero pass
his remaining years happily,

10 Enjoying as much as possible
as he did when his sons were alive –
this became the aim
of the five Pāṇḍava brothers

11 Who singly and collectively
obeyed Dhṛtarāṣṭra without demur.
Seeing them unhesitatingly devoted and selfless,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra

12 Behaved with them
like a guru with his disciples.
Gāndhārī also performed the *śrāddha*-rites
for her dead sons,

13 Gave lavishly to Brahmins, and so freed herself
from her debts to her sons.
In this way, finest-of-dharma-knowers
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,

14 Wise-in-the-ways-of-the-world Yudhiṣṭhira
and his brothers pūjā-respected the king.
The supremely mahā-radiant aged rājā,
the Kaurava-family-glory-enhancer

15 Failed to find anything disagreeable
in Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira.
So impeccable was the conduct
of the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas

16 That Ambikā's son rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
was supremely gratified.
Overcoming her grief for her dead sons,
Subala's daughter Gāndhārī

17 Behaved with the Pāṇḍavas
as if they were her own sons.
The glorious Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira
did everything to please

18 Vicitravīrya's son king Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and nothing to displease him.
Whatever was desired to be done
by lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra

19 And tapasyā-practising Gāndhārī,
any act, great or small,
that act, mahārāja, was instantly implemented
by the concerned Pāṇḍavas rājā,

20 The slayer-of-hostile-heroes Yudhiṣṭhira,
with pūjā-respect.
Lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra was so gratified
by the noble behaviour

21 That he regretted the remembered misdeeds
of his ill-minded son.
The king rose early every morning,
bathed, intoned his *japa*-meditation

22 And blessed the Pāṇḍavas
for future victories on the battlefield.
After the Brahmins' *svasti*-chants
over the sacred *hutāśana*-fire,

23 The lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
prayed for long life for the Pāṇḍavas.
Never even with his own sons
was the Kaurava patriarch so pleased –

24 Lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra so pleased –
as he was with Pāṇḍu's sons.
Delighting the Brahmins
and similarly delighting the Kṣatriyas,

25 The traders and Śūdras as well,
Yudhiṣṭhira was everyone's favourite.
Whatever crimes were perpetrated
by the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra –

26 He wiped them from his heart,
and concentrated on serving the king.
Anyone who did anything that distressed
Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra –

27 Immediately earned the contempt
of Pāṇḍu's wise son Yudhiṣṭhira.
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Duryodhana –

28 For fear of Yudhiṣṭhira
none dared discuss their misdeeds.
Indra-among-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī, Vidura -
with the patience and composure

29 Of foe-less Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira –
with his probity – were deeply impressed,
but not, O foe-conquering Janamejaya,
with Bhīma who tried to emulate Dharma's son

30 But could not restrain his bitter feelings
at the sight of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Whenever he saw Dharma's son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira honouring Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
slayer-of-enemies Kaurava Bhīma
did the same, but not from his heart.

[XV:3:1-7]

Transcreated by P. Lal

SECTION THREE

1 The people of the kingdom
(Vaiśampāyana continued),
noticed no weakening of the affection
that existed
between Duryodhana's father
and Yudhiṣṭhira.

2 But whenever, O rājā,
the Kaurava-rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
remembered his ill-minded son,
in his heart of hearts
the earth-lord felt bitterly
about Bhīma.

3 O Indra-among-rājās!
Bhīmasena also
always harboured a grudge
against lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

4 Wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhima
on the sly
was always doing something
to displease him,
fomenting disaffection against him
among favoured courtiers.

5 One day, remembering the misdeeds
of the monarch,
in the midst of friends,
he slapped his arm-pits

6 In a fit of anger,
within the hearing
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī.
Brooding on his enemies
Duryodhana and Karṇa
and Duḥśāsana,

7 Bhīma burst out passionately
with these harsh words:
"With my *parigha*-mace strong arms,
the sons of the blind king –

8 Such excellent weapons-experts –
I have despatched to the other world.
Look at my powerful arms
as formidable as iron maces!

9 They have crushed to pulp
the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Smeared with sandalpaste
and deserving sandalpaste-reverence,

10 They have annihilated Duryodhana
and all the sons and relatives!"
These words, that pierced like thorns,
spoken within earshot of the lord-of-men

11 By wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma,
deeply depressed Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
And the intelligent devī,
who knew the fickle ways of Kāla,

12 Gāndhārī, well-versed in all dharmas,
heard these bitter words also,
but did not think them to be true.
In this way,
fifteen years passed in the care
of lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira,

13 At the end of which period
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
remained grievously disturbed
by Bhīma's taunts.
This escaped the notice
of Kuntī's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,

14 White-horsed Arjuna,
Kuntī and illustrious Draupadī,
and the wise-in-dharma never-deviating
twin sons of Mādrī

15 Who were deeply dedicated
to serving rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
And so it happened that one day
Dhṛtarāṣṭra summoned his well-wishers,

16 And, with tears welling in his eyes,
he said to them:
"All of you know
how the Kauravas were massacred.

17 All my fault!
The Kauravas approved my fault!
That ill-minded fool,
that enhancer-of-his family's-fears;

18 Duryodhana – I installed him
ruler of the Kauravas!
Vāsudeva-Krishna advised me;
I rejected his beneficial words:

19 'Kill this ill-minded criminal,
along with his friends and supporters.'
Other wise men gave the same advice.
But I was blinded
by my fondness for my sons,
and fouled my own welfare.

20 Vidura and Bhīṣma
and Droṇa and Kṛpa
and mahātmā *bhagavān* Vyāsa,
at every step, repeatedly,

21 Sañjaya and Gāndhārī said the same.
This is what torments me.
All the guṇa-virtues
are possessed by the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,

22 Yet I deprived them of the ancestral prosperity
that is rightfully theirs.
Foreseeing the massacre of all the rājās,
Gada's elder brother,

23 Punisher-of-people Janārdana-Krishna
regarded it as excellently desirable.
So many misjudgements,
leading to so much destruction,

24 Hundreds of thousands of them,
piercing me like thorns . . . .
Now at last, I see,
after fifteen years,

25 Myself, an illminded criminal,
and I want to cleanse myself.
So I eat sparingly,
every other day,
and sometimes sparingly
every fourth day.

26 I eat only to survive.
Gāndhārī knows this.
The others – all my attendants –
think I eat as usual.

27 I do this because I know
how much Yudhiṣṭhira cares for me,
and I worry how hurt Pāṇḍu's son will be
if he gets to know of it.
I sleep on the ground on a *darbha*-grass mat
after intoning my *japa*-meditations,

28 And illustrious Gāndhārī also
practises a similar routine.
We have lost on the battlefield
a hundred unretreating sons.

29 We do not complain.
It was their Kṣatriya-dharma."
Having said this, Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra
turned to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.

30 "O Yādava! *Bhadraṁ te!*
May you prosper!
Listen to me, my son.
Cherished by you,
I have passed my days here
in great happiness.

31 I have given away much
in mahā-charity,
I have performed śrāddha-rituals
again and again.
Much religions merit have I gained,
my son, by these efforts.

32 She has lost all her sons,
yet Gāndhārī,
with great fortitude,
attends on me.
Those who harmed Gāndhārī,
who appropriated your prosperity, –

33 All those cruel ones have perished,
fulfilling their sva-dharma.
O delighter of the Kauravas! Kuru-nandana!
I can do nothing now for them.

34 They died facing their foes,
they have attained the realm
reserved for brave weapons-wielders.
I must now work
for whatever is helpful
and meritorious for me

35 And for Gāndhārī: And for this,
O Indra-among-rājās,
I need your permission.
You are the finest of arms-wielders,
you are the finest of those
who cherish dharma.

36 The rājā is the guru-lord
of all creatures endowed with *prāṇa.*
Which is why I make this request.
O heroic one!
I need your permission
to retire to the forest.

37 O rājā! Accompanised by Gāndhārī,
and dressed in rags and tree-bark,
I will pass my life in the forest,
always blessing you.

38 O bull-brave Bharata king!
Tāta! Dear one!
It is the practice of our dynasty,
when old age comes,
to hand over power to one's children
and retire to a forest-life.

39 O brave one! I will fast,
I will subsist on air,
and practise the severest tapasyā
together with my wife.

40 *Tāta*! Dear one!
You, as earth-lord, will share
in the fruits of our tapasyā,
because rājās share
whatever is auspicious or otherwise
in their kingdom."

41 Yudhiṣṭhira replied: "O king!
It does not please me
to see you suffering like this.
Dhīk! Shame on me!
I am so wicked, so lost
in the lust for authority!

42 To think that I and my brothers
never even guessed your misery –
you sleeping on the floor,
and wasting away fasting!

43 Aho! What a fool I have been!
And how profound you –
you inspired my trust in you,
and you concealed your discontent.

44 O protector of the world!
How can a kingdom, luxuries,
yajñas, pleasures mean anything to me
if you are unhappy?

45 O lord of men! Janeśvara!
Not only am I pained,
the entire kingdom is pained
seeing you suffer like this.
But what good are words
when dealing with such misery?

46 You are our father, our mother,
you are our supreme guru.
If you leave us,
what will we do?

[XV:3:47-54]

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47 Mahārāja! O finest of kings!
Let your *aurasa*-son Yuyutsu
become the rājā of the kingdom –
or anyone else you appoint.

48 I will retire to the forest.
You will rule the kingdom.
I am already burning with infamy –
why burn me more?

49 I am not the rājā,
you are the rājā.
I depend on you.
You are a guru-elder
wise in the ways of dharma.
How can I give permission to my guru?

50 O immaculate one!
I carry no malice in my heart
for Suyodhana-Duryodhana.
What had to be, had to be.
We – and they –
we were all fooled.

51 We are as much your children
as Duryodhana.
To me Gāndhārī
is the same as Kuntī.

52 O Indra-among-rājās!
I swear here
by the truth of my ātman
that if you leave me
and retire to the forest,
I will follow you there.

53 With you gone, this sea-surrounded
teeming-with-wealth earth
will cease to be the provider
of any joy to me.

54 All this is yours, O Indra-among-rājās.
I bow my head before you.
I seek your grace. Favour us.
Shake off your mind's fever.

55 O lord of the bountiful earth!
I think destiny is at work
in what has come over you.
Be gracious to me –
allow me to serve and cherish you,
and so dispel my mind's fever."

56 "O delighter of the Kauravas!"
Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied.
"*Tāta*! Dear one!
I have made up my mind.
Prabhu! Lord! I go to the forest
for the family's welfare.

57 O lord of men! My son!
For long have you cherished me
with the deepest service and respect.
I am now old.
I need your permission
to retire to the forest."

58 Saying this to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Ambikā's son,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, trembling,
folded his hands in *añjali*
and said

59 To mahātmā Sañjaya
and mahā-chariot-hero Kṛpa:
"I want you to speak on my behalf
to lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira.

60 I am an old man.
I speak too much.
My mind and heart get affected.
My mouth is dry."

61 Saying this, rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the wise dharmātmā
perpetuator of Kaurava glory
leaned on Gāndhārī for support.

62 Seeing Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra
in that helpless state,
slayer-of-hostile-heroes Kuntī's son
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira became despondent.

63 "He who had the strength
of a hundred elephants,"
remarked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"that rājā
is today leaning for support
on a woman.

64 He who once crushed to pieces
Bhīmā's iron statue
is leaning for support today
on a frail lady.

65 *Dhīk*! Shame on me
for being so ignorant of dharma!
Dhīk! on my intelligence!
Dhīk! on my *śruti*-learning!
Shame on me for allowing
this humiliation of an earth-lord!

66 If rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and illustrious Gāndhārī
are determined to fast,
I will follow the example
of my guru-elder,
and fast with them."

67 O rājā Janamejaya!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
dharma-knowing Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
scooped cool water in his palms
and gently stroked
the chest of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

68 The touch of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's fingers,
adorned with gems
and fragrant with auspicious
medicinal herbs,
soothed rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
back to normalcy.

69 "Son of Pāṇḍu," Dhṛtarāṣṭra said,
"soothe me again with your hands.
O lotus-eyed one!
Embrace me. I am well again.

70 O lord of men!
Let me smell your head.
I am so pleased and happy.
I want to embrace you in my arms.

71 I have not taken any food
for four days.
O tiger-brave Kaurava! I feel weak,
so weak I can hardly move.

72 *Tāta*! Dear one!
Talking to you was such an effort.
I felt so weak
that I nearly collapsed.

73 *Prabhu*! Lord!
O perpetuator of Kaurava glory!
The nectarine touch of your hands
has restored me to my senses."

74 Vaiśampāyana continued: O Bharata!
These words of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
his father's elder brother,
made Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
resume lovingly his soothing strokes
on the king's entire body.

75 Fresh *prāṇa*-life-breath
coursed through the earth-lord's body.
He embraced Pāṇḍu's son
and smelt his head.

76 Vidura and the others
burst into loud sobbing grief;
so intense was their grief they said nothing
to the Pāṇḍava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

77 Wise-in-dharma Gāndhārī
suppressed her grief,
O rājā, and cautioned the others,
"Don't do this. Keep calm."

78 But Kuntī and the other ladies,
deeply afflicted,
surrounded her, with tears
streaming from their eyes.

79 Dhṛtarāṣṭra turned to Yudhiṣṭhira,
saying: "O rājā!
O bull-brave Bharata!
Allow me my tapasyā.

80 *Tāta*! Dear one!
Too much talk has enfeebled me.
My son, I do not want
to be troubled any more."

81 Even as that Indra-of-the-Kauravas
was saying this
to Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
a noise of mahā-lamentation
arose from all
the assembled warriors.

82 Seeing the rājā suffering,
weak and worn out,
emaciated by fasting,
in such an unbecoming state,

83 A mahā-*prabhu* great lord
reduced to skin-and-bone,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
said to his *pitā*-ancestor:

84 "O finest-of-men!
I want neither life nor kingdom.
O foe-crushing rājā!
All I want is to please you.

85 If you wish to favour me,
if I deserve your kindness,
please eat something.
After that, I shall decide what to do."

86 Mahā-radiant Dhṛtarāṣṭra
replied to Yudhiṣṭhira:
"Give me permission to go to the forest,
my son, and I will eat."

87 Indra-among-rājās Dhṛtarāṣṭra
was saying this to Yudhiṣṭhira
when Satyavatī's son Vyāsa arrived
and spoke to them.

SECTION FOUR

1 "Mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira," said Vyāsa,
"do not think twice:
do whatever delighter-of-the Kauravas
mahā-radiant Dhṛtarāṣṭra wants done.

2 The king is an old man.
He has lost all his sons.
He will not be able
to endure his grief any longer.

3 Mahā-fortune-favoured Gāndhārī
is a mahā-wise lady,
a lady of compassion,
which is how, mahārāja,
she has succeeded with fortitude
in absorbing her intense grief.

4 I will repeat what he said.
Listen to what I say.
Give the rājā permission.
Let him not waste his life here.

5 Allow this king to follow
the path of the ancient rāja-ṛṣis.
It is right for rāja-ṛṣis
to retire at last to the forest."

6 Advised by Vyāsa of wonderful karma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
mahā-radiant Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
replied to the mahā-muni:

7 "*Bhagavan!* Revered one!
You are our adorable *bhagavan*!
You are our guru!
You are the *bhagavan*
of our kingdom,
the prop of our family.

8 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
I am your son,
you are my father,
my rājā, my guru.
How can a dharma-observing son
ever refuse his father?"

9 Well-versed-in-the-Vedas Vyāsa,
mahā-radiant mahā-kavi Vyāsa,
incomparable Vyāsa
said again to Yudhiṣṭhira:

10 "O mahā-muscled Bharata descendant!
What you say is right.
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra is old,
in the last years of his life.

11 With my permission and yours,
this lord-of-the-earth
should live as he chooses.
We should not stand in his way.

12 This, after all, Yudhiṣṭhira,
is the primary dharma of rāja-ṛṣis:
to die on the field of battle
or in the depths of a forest.

13 O Indra-among-rājās!
Your father rājā Pāṇḍu
revered Dhṛtarāṣṭra
as a disciple reveres a guru.

14 Dhṛtarāṣṭra performed many yajñas
and distributed as *dakṣiṇā*
hill-huge heaps of gems and jewels.
He ruled the whole earth,
and assiduously arranged for the security
and prosperity of his subjects.

15 During your term of exile,
depending on his sons,
he enjoyed a prospering kingdom
and gave away generous wealth.

16 O defectless tiger-among-men!
You and your followers also
have served him and illustrious Gāndhārī
like disciples serving a guru.

17 Give your father permission
to practise his tapasyā.
This is the ideal time.
He does not, Yudhiṣṭhira,
harbour even the slightest grudge
against you."

18 In this way (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Vyāsa persuaded the earth-lord
and when Kuntī's son said, "So be it,"
Vyasa returned to the forest.

19 After the departure of *bhagavan* Vyāsa,
Pāṇḍu's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
approached his old *pitā*-ancestor,
and humbly said:

20 "What *bhagavan* Vyāsa has said,
what you yourself want,
what mahā-bowman Kṛpa has said,
and what Vidura has said,

21 What Yuyutsu and Sañjaya have said–
that I will do.
I respect them all –
they seek the welfare of my race.

22 But I insist, O king, on one thing.
I bow my head before you
and I beg of you – please eat first,
and then proceed to your āshram."

SECTION FIVE

1 Obtaining rājā Yudhiṣṭhira's permission
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
famed rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, with Gāndhārī,
went to his palace.

2 Emaciated and weak,
the wise earth-lord walked slowly,
like an aging leader
of an elephant-herd.

3 Learned Vidura followed him,
as did the Sūta Sañjaya,
the supreme bowman Kṛpa,
son of Śaradvat.

4 Entering his palace, O rājā,
he performed the morning rites,
gratified the Brahmins,
and then ate some food himself.

5 O Bharata! Wise-in-dharma Gāndhārī
and deep-thinking Kuntī
were pūjā-respected by their daughters-in-law,
and then they also ate.

6 After finest-of-the-Kauravas Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Vidura and the Pāṇḍavas
finished their meal,
they formed a circle round the old king.

7 Mahārāja! Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
stroked the back
of Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
and said to him:

8 "O tiger-brave rājā!
Delighter-of-the-Kauravas!
Always keep dharma as your ideal,
and act decisively and firmly
when you rule this kingdom
that consists of eight limbs:
law, judges, assessors, scribes,
astrologers, gold, fire, water.

9 Son of Pāṇḍu and Kuntī!
Mahārāja!
You know that dharma alone
makes a kingdom prosper,
but listen to me
on how this is achieved.

10 Always, Yudhiṣṭhira,
honour the deeply learned.
Listen to them,
and unhesitatingly act on their advice.

11 Offer them pūjā-respect, O rājā,
first thing at dawn,
and consult with them always
on what needs to be done.

12 O Bharata rājā!
Tātā! Dear one!
Honoured by you,
and realising that you desire
the welfare of others,
they will give you beneficial advice.

13 Restrain your senses,
as your discipline horses.
Like wealth well invested,
they will serve you well later.

14 As for your choice of ministers –
appoint only those
whose honesty has been tested,
who have hereditary connections
with the royal dynasty,
who are self-controlled,
virtuous in birth and deed,
and accountable in office.

15 Spies must always be chosen
from your native subjects,
tested for loyalty, expert in disguises,
and unknown to your enemies.

16 Your city must be fortified
with impregnable defences;
with massive walls and gates.
The city's inner areas
must be protected with a ring
of *aṭṭa*-walls.

17 All the gates of the city
must be massive and strong,
with meticulously maintained machines
provided for their protection.

18 Get your work done, Bharata,
by men of proven birth and character.
And see that whatever you eat
is an aid to your health.

19 In eating, in sports,
in the wearing of garlands,
in the beds you sleep in,
exercise great caution.
Protect the ladies of the palace
with elderly, trustworthy guards,

20 Yudhiṣṭhira, men of good birth, learned,
of proven character.
As for ministers –
choose exceptionally learned Brahmins,

21 Who are humble, of noble birth,
expert in dharma-and-artha,
and who prefer a simple life-style.
By all means, consult them,
but not too many of them,
and not for too long.

22 In matters of grave policy,
take all your ministers
(or a few, as you think appropriate)
to a secure spot
such as a sealed chamber,
and consult with them there.

23 Or you can go to a forest,
not thickly grassed or shrubbed,
and hold the meeting there,
but never at dead of night.
Apes and birds
and other mimicking creatures,

24 And disadvantaged and feeble-minded humans
are excluded from the meeting-place.
The mess that is created
when an earth-lord's secrets are exposed

25 Can never be completely cleaned –
of this I am sure.
The mess that is thus created –
mention this to your maṇḍala of ministers

26 Again and again, Yudhiṣṭhira,
and stress the benefits of secrecy,
O foe-destroying rājā.
Affection or disaffection for you
in the minds of your subjects
in the capital and provinces,

27 O Kaurava-glory-enhancing rājā –
that you must always get to know.
And when you dispense justice,
O rājā,

28 See that your officers
strictly fit the punishment to the crime.
Your laws, O Bharata, should be such
that when punishment is inflicted,

29 It is ordered by your officers
only after careful investigation.
Those who take bribes, Yudhiṣṭhira,
those who sleep with others' wives,

30 Those who dispense excessive punishment,
those who commit perjury,
those who spread scandal,
those who are avaricious,
those who are guilty of murder,
those addicted to blind violence,

31 Those who disrupt sabhās and sports,
those who create caste-confusions,
should be speedily punished,
taking into consideration
the time and place of the offence,
punished with death or heavy fines.

32 Every morning, on waking up,
you must meet all officers
who are entrusted with money-allocation;
then bathe, dress and eat.

33 After that, the needs of your armed forces
must be attended to,
so that your soldiers are well gratified.
The best time
for meeting envoys and spies
is in the evening.

34 Prepare at night the agenda
for the next day.
Midnights and middays
are reserved for sport and entertainment.

35 O bull-brave Bharata!
Dispenser of lavish *dakṣiṇās*!
All time and any time is work time.
Be always ready, attired and ornamented.

36 *Tāta*! My dear son!
Work is a wheel
that never stops spinning.
Do all you can lawfully
to fill your treasury
with productive activity.

37 Maharaja! In this regard,
do nothing that is unlawful.
Those who specialise in disclosing
the weaknesses of rājās, –

38 Assign trustworthy mercenaries
to safely get rid of them.
O enhancer-of-Kaurava-glory!
Assess their work before you appoint officers.

39 Ability or inability is recognised
by the quality of activity.
Tāta! My son! Firm-vowed
must be your army's general –

40 And brave, unshaken by misfortune,
a *bhakta* devoted to your welfare.
Son of Pāṇḍu! All working for you
in your territories –

41 Mechanics and craftsmen –
must be cared for by you well
like cows and mules are looked after
by their owners.
Your own shortcomings
and the shortcomings of others –

42 Keep a strict watch on them,
Yudhiṣṭhira – always.
All the subjects of your kingdom
who excel in their professions,

43 And are dedicated to your welfare,
must receive your special favours.
A wise ruler-of-men ensures
the prosperity of his talented subjects.
They must never be neglected.
They are your assets, as solid as mountains."

SECTION SIX

1 "O Bharata descendant," continued Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"It is essential
that you know the maṇḍala-groupings
of your enemies,
of neutrals, and of those who favour
both you and your enemies.

2 O destroyer of foes!
Get to know well also
the four kinds of enemies
(actual enemies, allies of enemies,
those who wish victory for both sides,
and those who wish defeat for both),
the six kinds of *ātatāyin*-terrorists
(the arsonist, the poison-giver,
the armed aggressor with intent to kill,
the wealth-stealer,
the ravager of one's fertile fields,
the molester of one's wife),
and those who are your true allies,
and allies who side with your enemies.

3 Enemies concentrate on ministers,
outlying provinces, forts, and soldiers,
which is why, O excellent Kaurava,
they should get your special attention.

4 *Prabhu!* Lord! Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
These twelve areas
should be a rājā's major concerns
with ministers specially, sixty others

5 (Eight dealing with agriculture and the like,
twenty-eight with the army and the like,
fourteen with atheists,
and eighteen with ministers and the like)
constitute what learned ācāryas
term as maṇḍala-groupings.
Understand these thoroughly, Yudhiṣṭhira:
peace, war, marching,
retreating, sowing disaffection, conciliation.

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6 Development and decline
and staying as one is,
get to know these well also,
O excelling mahā-muscled Kaurava.
The twelve guṇas mentioned
combined with the sixty –
This total of seventy-two
you must grasp thoroughly.

7 Kuntī's son! When your own army
becomes powerful,
and the enemy's army is weak,
that is when a rājā
should strike
till victory is won.

8 When the enemy is strong
and you are weak,
then a sensible king
works out a peace treaty.

9 Collect sufficient equipment and provisions,
the more the better, O Bharata.
Once marching orders have been issued,
no delay or hesitation is acceptable.

10 Orders should fit the person ordered –
no compromise can be made in this.
O Bharata! In a desperate situation,
part with the least fertile land,

11 The least amount of base gold,
the weakest ally,
and the least dependable soldiers
to a conquering enemy.
If the enemy is in desperate straits,
a shrewd-in-treaty-making

12 Ruler should, O bull-brave Bharata son,
arrange nothing less than a peace
which gets him the most fertile land,
and the best gold, allies and soldiers.
Perfectly in order is to keep as hostage
the son of the defeated rājā.

13 Should an unforeseen calamity strike,
a ruler should seek
the best counsel to overcome it.
O Indra-among-rājās!
He must look after his kingdom's
deprived and distressed subjects.

14 Having done that, a mahā-powerful king
should take steps,
immediately or gradually,
to subjugate his enemy
by creating obstacles for him
and by depleting his treasury.

15 A ruler who wishes to preserve
his authority and prosperity
must never harm the interests
of his vassals.

16 Son of Kuntī! Never militarily antagonise
an earth-lord
whose aim is world-domination.
The best you can do
is get your ministers to create rifts
in his ranks.

17 A powerful ruler should refrain
from harassing a weak ruler.
What is important is to assist the noble,
and exterminate the wicked.

18 O tiger-brave rājā!
Bend when affliction strikes,
like the cane bowing before a storm.
Should a powerful ruler
decide to attack
a weak counterpart,

19 Let the weak one seek peace
and conciliation.
And if the peace efforts
make no headway,

20 He should seek the help of those
who wish him well,
and do whatever he reasonably can
to block the aggressor.
All failing, let him fight,
and lose everything –
even his life – doing battle,
thus gaining *mukti*-salvation."

SECTION SEVEN

1 "O finest-of-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira!"
continued Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"See with a clear eye
what peace is, what war is.
Peace is of two kinds,
and so is war –
peace with a strong foe or a weak foe,
war with a strong foe or a weak foe.
War and peace are variously planned,
under various conditions.

2 Study objectively, O Kaurava,
your strength and your weakness.
It is futile to attack an intelligent enemy
whose soldiers are well-fed and confident.
Think of some other option
of overcoming him.

3 An enemy lacking such advantage
is the one that gets routed.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Once the enemy is beaten,
take steps to ensure
your advantage remains secure.

4 Ensure also that your vanquished enemy
is beset with problems.
Keep terrorising him
by harassing his humiliated ranks.

5 A king who is learned in the *śāstras*,
when attacking an enemy,
should ponder his own weakness and his enemy's,
and the three kinds of śakti:

6 *Utsāha*-confidence, *prabhu*-leadership
and *mantra*-strategy.
If he has these, O Bharata,
then let him attack.
If a king lacks these,
let him bide his time.

7 *Prabhu*-lord! A rājā needs
money-power, allies-power,
forest-dwellers-power, labourers-power,
and traders-and-artisans-power.

8 O rājā! Above everything
are allies-power and money-power.
Traders-and-artisans-power and labourers-power,
if you ask me, have equal importance.

9 That applies also to the power
of spies and envoys.
A rājā should know how to employ them
at the appropriate time.

10 O Kaurava lord-of-men!
When calamity strikes a rājā,
it takes many forms.
Let me give you a list.

11 O rājā, calamities come
in many shapes indeed.
Son of Pāṇḍu! Know them,
and learn how to deal with them.

12 O foe-crushing rājā!
Keeping time and place in mind,
his army and other resources,
a king should plan an offensive.

13 Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira! It is essential
that his soldiers
are well-fed and confident.
If that is so,
he can arrange to attack,
whatever the season.

14 For the ruin of his enemy,
his strategy should take
the form of a river:
the quivers being the stones,
the horses and chariots
the currents, the war-flags
the trees on the banks,
the slush and the mud
the elephants and foot-soldiers.

15 O descendant of Bharata!
Three war strategy-formations are advised
in the Veda of Uśanas-Śukra.
O radiant one! *Vibho*!
They are the *śakata*-chariot,
the circular *padma*-lotus
and the *vajra*-thunderbolt
shaped like a needle.

16 Let him get to know his foe's strength
with the help of spies,
and let him assess his own also;
then launch an attack,
within his own territory,
or in his enemy's kingdom.

17 He must see to it that his soldiers
are given every satisfaction.
Only after knowing where you stand
must you go in for peace or war.

18 The protection of one's body
is the top priority, mahārāja –
which means doing what is best for oneself
for both here and hereafter.

19 Mahārāja! A rājā who acts
after studying all this
governs his subjects with dharma
and attains heavenly after-life.

20 O most excellent Kaurava!
This is the ideal way
to secure the welfare of your people
and your after-life happiness.

21 O finest of kings!
Bhīṣma and Vidura and Krishna
have already advised you similarly.
Because I love you,
I have felt it necessary
to say what I have said.

22 You who offer lavish *dakṣiṇās*!
Implement what I recommend.
You will receive the affection of your people
and the happiness of heaven.

23 Both get identical fruits –
the earth-lord who pleases the gods
with a hundred Aśvamedha sacrifices,
and he who rules his subjects with dharma."

SECTION EIGHT

1 "O bull-brave lord of the earth!"
Yudhiṣṭhira said.
"I will do what you say.
Advise me further.

2 Bhīṣma is in heaven.
Madhusūdana-Krishna has left us.
Vidura and Sañjaya will accompany you.
Who but you can advise me?

3 O lord of the earth! O world-ruler!
I promise you this –
whatever you have advised me,
I will faithfully accomplish."

4 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
These words of wise dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
prompted rāja-ṛṣi Dhṛtarāṣṭra
to seek the permission
of Kuntī's son, saying:

5 "My son, enough for now.
I feel the strain of speaking."
With these words, rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
retired to Gāndhārī's mansion.

6 Dharma-dedicated Gāndhārī devī
said to her Prajāpati-like husband
after he was comfortably seated –
her wise-in-the-ways-of-Kāla husband:

7 "You have obtained the permission
of mahā-ṛṣi Vyāsa,
and also Yudhiṣṭhira.
When will you go to the forest?"

8 Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied: "Gāndhārī!
I have my mahatmā *pitā's* permission.
I also have Yudhiṣṭhira's.
I will soon retire to the forest.

9 Before I leave, however,
I wish to give away wealth
to my subjects who will attend
the *preta*-rites I perform
for the sake of the peace
of my dice-addicted dead sons.

10 This I have decided."
Saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Dhṛtarāṣṭra informed Yudhiṣṭhira
of his intention,

11 And lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira
made all the necessary arrangements.
The Brahmins of Kurujāṅgala
were delighted,

12 As were the Kṣatriyas,
Vaiśyas and Śūdras.
The king emerged
from the inner apartments

13 And saw a multitude of subjects
gathered in the palace.
He saw all of them,
from various parts of the kingdom –

14 So many of his well-wishers,
O earth-lord Janamejaya,
and so many Brahmins
from so many provinces –

15 And the wise son of Ambikā
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra said to them:
"For long have you and the Kauravas
lived amicably together.

16 You have always wished
each other's welfare.
What I am going
to tell you now –

17 I would like you to accept it
like disciples accepting an ācārya's words.
I have decided to go to the forest
with Gāndhārī.

18 I have the permission of Vyāsa
and Kuntī's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
I now need your permission.
Do not refuse me your permission.

19 The abounding affection that exists
between you and me
will be hard to find, I know,
between other rājās and their subjects.

20 O my defectless people!
I am old. I am sonless.
Gāndhārī and I are emaciated
with fasting.

21 I have passed my days happily
in Yudhiṣṭhira's kingdom.
O my excellent subjects!
It has been a happiness
greater than what I enjoyed
when Duryodhana ruled.

22 I am blind, I am old, I am sonless.
O my mahā-fortune-favoured people!
What is there left for me except the forest?
I need your permission to leave."

23 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
Wild was the grief
of the people of Kurujāṅgala.
They wept copiously.

24 Mahā-energetic Dhṛtarāṣṭra
saw them paralysed by grief,
and wanting to say something more,
he addressed them again.

SECTION NINE

1 "Śāntanu ruled the earth,"
said Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
"After him, Vicitravīrya,
who was guided by Bhīṣma.

2 *Tāta*! My dear subjects!
You are aware of all this.
Then came my brother Pāṇḍu.
This also you know every well.

3 He protected all of you
in every possible way.
After Pāṇḍu, it was my turn
to look after your welfare.

[XV:9:4-10]

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4 O defectless ones,
you who are mahā-fortune-favoured,
I ask you to forgive me
if I have in any way failed you.
This fault-free kingdom
was enjoyed by Duryodhana,

5 And even that ill-minded fool
never wronged any of you.
But the ill-minded wrong-doing
of that *ahaṁkāra*-ego-driven man

6 Led to a mahā-extermination
of rulers and nobles,
of the Kauravas, of the entire earth.
Right or wrong,
I acknowledge my own involvement
in all that happened.

7 I fold my hands in *añjali*
and I ask you
to think of me kindly in your hearts.
'This lord of men
is an old man, a grief-stricker man
who has lost all his sons.

8 He was our rājā,
he is of royal lineage.'
Think this, and let me go.
She is old and emaciated,
she has lost all her sons,
tapasyā-dedicated *tapasvinī*

9 Gāndhārī, grieving over her sons,
wishes to accompany me.
Look on us as two helpless elders,
with dead sons, and dead hopes,

10 And give us permission to leave.
Bhadraṁ te! May you prosper!
We seek your refuge.
Kuntī's son rājā Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira

11 Will now be the one to receive
your gracious goodwill.
He will never fall in disfavour
with you – this I know –

12 Because he has four brothers
of limitless lustre
to advise and assist him.
They are veritable Lokapālas,
the guardians of the world,
they have insight
into all the subtleties
of dharma-and-artha.

13 Like Bhagavān Brahmā,
the Sarva-bhūta-jagat-pati,
the Lord-of-all-the-world's-creatures,
mahā-muscled and mahā-energetic Yudhiṣṭhira
will now rule you,
assisted by Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins.

14 Let me now tell you
what most needs to be said.
I place Yudhiṣṭhira in your hands,
I place you in Yudhiṣṭhira's hands.

15 I leave you in the hands
of a hero.
What wrongs I, my sons, and others
may have done to you –

16 I ask you to forgive us,
and give me leave to go.
You have never in the past
harboured ill against me.

17 So I fold my hands in *añjali*
with the deepest guru-bhakti
and I offer you my namakāra.
Fickle and unintelligent,
greedy and kāma-pursuing
were my self-seeking sons.

[XV:9:18; 10:1-6]

18 O defectless ones!
For all their misdeeds,
I and Gāndhārī
ask your forgiveness."
These words of the king
brought tears to everyone's eyes,
and they stood there, silent,
staring at each other.

SECTION TEN

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1 O Kaurava Janamejaya! Hearing these words
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the assembly of people was stupefied
(continued Vaiśampāyana).

2 Their throats were dry with grief,
they did not say a word.
Lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra
saw them, silent, and said:

3 "O most excellent ones!
I am old, my sons are all dead.
With my dharma-dedicated wife,
again and again I mourn my state.

4 My *pitā* Kṛṣṇā-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
has given me permission
to retire to the forest.
Wise-in-dharma king Yudhiṣṭhira,

5 O my defectless people,
has also given permission.
Now, with bowed head
I seek your permission
to retire to the forest,
accompanied by Gāndhārī."

6 O rājā Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
when the Kurujāngala people
heard these pitiful words of the Kaurava rājā,
they sobbed ceaselessly,

7 Covering their faces with the ends
of their *uttarīya* upper garments,
like fathers and mothers lamenting
when their children leave them.

8 With feeling-bereft hearts
they absorbed the shock
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's decision
to retire to the forest.

9 Slowly they adjusted to the emptiness
created by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's decision,
and mumbled sadly among themselves
before expressing their consent.

10 O rājā! They wanted to be brief
about their unanimous decision,
so they selected a Brahmin
to speak to the earth-lord –

11 A learned-in-artha Brahmin, O rājā,
of sterling character, fearless,
wise in the teachings of the Ṛc-scriptures,
respect-deserving Sāmba.

12 Honouring maharāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and with the approval of all,
the learned Brahmin, pleasing the assembly,
addressed the rājā:

13 "O rājā! O valiant lord-of-men!
I have been authorised
to speak on behalf of all here.
With your permission, I will speak.

14 O radiant Indra-among-rājās!
What you say is so.
There is not the slightest untruth
in your words.
You are our well-wisher,
we are yours.

15 There has never been a rājā
in this dynasty
who has not pleased his subjects
and earned their approval.

16 You have all ruled over us
like fathers and brothers.
King Duryodhana never did to us
anything that should not be done.

17 Mahārāja, what Satyavatī's son,
dharmātmā muni Vyāsa,
has advised, you should do,
for he is our supreme guru.

18 After you leave us, O rājā,
pain and grief will be our lot,
when we recall your hundreds upon hundreds
of guṇa-virtues.

19 O earth-lord! Protected we were
by Śāntanu, by rājā Citrāṅgada,
by your father Vicitravīrya
who was counselled by illustrious Bhīṣma,

20 And by master-of-the-earth Pāṇḍu
who was counselled by you;
and rājā Duryodhana also
cared for us as they did.

21 Never did your son harm us,
O king, in any way.
We trusted lord-of-men Duryodhana
as one trusts one's own father.

22 You are fully aware
how we were were treated by him.
May wise Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
also rule over us
for thousands of years
with the same graciousness,

23 And may we, O king, happily
pass our days under him –
a king of pious karma
who emulates the ancient rāja-ṛṣis

24 Of the Bharata dynasty
such as Kuru, Samvara and others,
a learned dharmātmā ruler
of impeccable character
who performs *yajñas*
with lavish *dakṣiṇā*-gifts.

25 Mahārāja! Even the subtlest seeker
will find no shortcoming in him.
Protected by you, we have happily
passed our day under Yudhiṣṭhira's rule.

26 We have not the slightest complaint
against you and your son.
And what you have said about Duryodhana
and the gruesome family bloodshied,

27 O delighter of the Kauravas,
about that I have something to say.
Duryodhana is not the one responsible
for what happened, nor you,

28 Nor are Karṇa and Saubala-Śakuni
to be blamed for the carnage.
Without a doubt it was all
the will of the gods.

29 Futile is the will of mankind
against the will of the gods.
Eighteen *akṣauhiṇīs* gathered,
mahārāja,

30 And were wiped out in eighteen days
by the bull-brave Kaurava warriors:
Bhīṣma and Droṇa and Kṛpa
and mahātmā Karṇa

31 And valiant Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
and the four sons of Pāṇḍu –
Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins.

32 O king! The will of the gods
permitted that slaughter.
It goes without saying that,
Kṣatriyas specially, on a battlefield,

33 Should kill, and get killed
by their enemies.
By the physical prowess
of these tiger-brave warriors,

34 Horses and elephants and chariots
have been destroyed.
Your son was not the cause
of the deaths of these mahātmā rājās.

35 Nor were you the cause, nor your followers,
nor Karṇa, nor Saubala-Śakuni.
O incomparable Kaurava!
The slaughter of these thousands of rājās

36 Was the will of the gods.
How else can one explain it?
You are respected as the guru
and *prabhu*-lord of the world.

37 We grant you permission to leave,
and to your son we say:
'Lord of men! May you attain,
with your followers, the realm of heroes!'

38 May he experience the joy of heaven,
blessed by these excellent Brahmins.
May supreme *puṇya*-merit be yours,
may you be stable in dharma!

39 O pure-vowed knower of dharma!
May you always cherish dharma!
It is futile to entrust the Pāṇḍavas
in our care and protection.

40 The Pāṇḍavas are worthy of ruling heaven,
leave alone the earth.
In times of prosperity or decline,
O deeply discerning

41 Descendant of the Kaurava dynasty,
the Pāṇḍavas will receive
the loyalty of their subjects
who respect their radiant character.
Agrahāra-village-gifts
and *pārivarhā*-village-rewards
are given to Brahmins
by the earth-lord

42 Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
who continues this tradition
practised by his dynasty's rājās
who cherished their subjects.
Far-sighted, gentle-mannered,
like Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,

43 With never-small-thinking ministers
always assisting him,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
is a mahā-minded personality,
a bull-brave Bharata
kind even to his enemies.

44 So wise, yet so simple and gracious
in the way he sees things.
He treats us like his own sons.
And because they are with him
who is the son of Dharma,
never will anything harmful

45 Be done to us, O rāja-ṛṣi,
by Bhīma, Arjuna and others.
O Kaurava! Sweet with the sweet,
but harsh with the harsh
with the ferocity
of a venomous snake,

46 The valiant mahātmās are always
busy with the citizens' welfare.
Neither Kuntī, nor Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
nor Ulūpī, nor Sātvatī-Subhadrā

47 Will ever do anything
that harms the people of our land.
The affection you have showered on us
has increased in Yudhiṣṭhira's care.

48 The people of this land
will never forget that affection.
Even those who practise adharma,
by Kuntī's mahā-chariot-hero sons,

49 Who themselves practise dharma,
are given the required protection.
O rājā! Remove the grief over Yudhiṣṭhira
that troubles your mind

50 And, O bull-brave king, cherish dharma.
Namaste! We honour you!"
These words of dharma and *guṇa*-virtue
(continued Vaiśampāyana)

51 Received the assent of all:
"*Sādhu*! *Sādhu*! Excellent! Excellent!"
Dhṛtarāṣṭra repeatedly approved them,
accepting them whole-heartedly.

52 Slowly the assembly of citizens
dispersed, one by one,
all of them offering their pūjā-respect
to rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

53 O bull-brave Bharata Janamejaya!
Dhṛtarāṣṭra folded his hands
in *prāñja*li before the people,
offering them his pūjā-respect.
He returned with Gāndhārī to his mansion.
I will tell you what happened next.

SECTION ELEVEN

1 The night ended (continued Vaiśampāyana)
and Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
sent Vidura
to Yudhiṣṭhira's palace.

2 Foremost of intelligent men,
mahā-energetic Vidura
said to Yudhiṣṭhira,
the unwavering glorious rājā:

3 "O rājā! Mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra
has decided to go to the forest
on the full moon night
in the month of Kārtika.

4 O finest of the Kaurava dynasty!
He needs some wealth from you
to perform the śrāddha funeral rites
of mahātmā Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma,

5 Droṇa, Somadatta,
wise Bāhlīka,
and all his sons and well-wishers
who perished in battle –

6 And, if you approve,
of the wicked Saindhava Jayadratha."
These words of Vidura
made Yudhiṣṭhira

7 And Pāṇḍava Guḍākeśa-Arjuna happy.
They pūjā-praised Vidura.
But the bitter anger of Bhīma
could not be suppressed,

8 For the words of Vidura
roused in the heart
of mahā-energetic Bhīma
memories of what Duryodhana did.
Noticing the objection of Bhīma,
Phālguna-Arjuna

9 Bent his diademed head and said
to his bull-brave brother:
"The rājā is our *pitā*, Bhīma,
he is an old man
who seeks a life of *vana-vāsa*,
his last days in the forest.

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10 Before leaving, he wishes
to give *aurdha-dehika* gifts
in memory of the spirits
of his slain well-wishers.
O Kaurava, he wishes to give away
the wealth you won by conquest.

11 O mahā-muscled one!
He wishes to give to Bhīṣma and others.
Do not refuse him.
It is our good fortune,
O mahā-muscled one,
that he wants wealth from us.

12 Look at the topsy-turvy ways
of Cosmic Time Kāla!
Once upon a time,
the lord-of-men of the world –

13 Now, all his followers slain,
and he preparing for forest-life!
O tiger-brave hero!
Do not deny his last wish.

14 O mahā-muscular one!
To refuse him now
is to violate dharma.
Learn from your elder brother,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
who is our *īśvara*-lord.

15 O bull-brave Bharata!
More than taking,
learn the art of giving."
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
pūjā-praised these words
of dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna.

16 Still possessed by wrath,
Bhima replied:
"Phalguna-Arjuna!
We will ourselves perform
the *preta-kārya* funeral rites
of Bhīṣma,

17 King Somadatta, Bhūriśravas,
rāja-ṛṣi Bāhlīka, mahātmā Droṇa,

18 And others.
Kuntī will perform the rites of Karṇa.
O tiger-among-men!
The *śrāddha* funeral rites
must not be performed
by the Kaurava king Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

19 This is what I think.
We must not delight our enemies.
Let Duryodhana plunge from misery
into worse misery!

20 These scoundrels of our family
almost destroyed the whole earth!
Have you so soon forgotten the hardships
of twelve long years,

21 Have you forgotten our secret exile,
living disguised,
and the great grief of Draupadī?
The affection
Dhṛtarāṣṭra has now for us –
where was it then?

22 Wearing black deerskin,
deprived of all our ornaments,
with the Pāñcāla princess trailing,
did you not obey this rājā?

23 Where was Droṇa then, and Bhīṣma?
and Somadatta?
Thirteen years you spent
in the forest –

24 Where was this old *pitā* then,
and his affection for you?
Have you forgotten, Pārtha-Arjuna,
that this family scoundrel,

25 This wicked-minded Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
during the dice-game,
turned to Vidura and asked:
'Tell me, what have we won?' "
Kuntī's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
overheard what Bhīma said.
He was wise. He said sharply:
"Shut up! Be silent."

SECTION TWELVE

1 Arjuna said, "You are my guru-elder,
Bhīma. What more can I say?
As for Dhṛtarāṣṭra, he is a rāja-ṛṣi,
he deserves to be honoured.

2 Those who carry on the tradition
of ārya-nobility
remember only the good others do.
they are the *puruṣottamas,*
the best-among-men who overlook
any wrongs done to them."

3 Listening to these words
of mahātmā Phālguna-Arjuna,
Kuntī's son dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
said to Vidura:

4 "Kṣattā-Vidura! On my behalf,
inform Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra
that I will give him
whatever wealth he needs
to perform the śrāddha-rites
of his sons.

5 *Vibho!* Radiant one!
Whatever he needs for the rites
of Bhīṣma and others,
my treasury will provide.
Let Bhīma have no uneasy thoughts
in this matter."

6 Having said this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
pūjā-praised Arjuna.
But incensed Bhīmasena
kept glancing sideways
at Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

7 Profoundly wise Yudhiṣṭhira
again said to Vidura:
"King Dhṛtarāṣṭra should not be angry
with Bhīmasena.

8 You know how intelligent Bhīma
suffered the heat
and the rains and other hardships
during his forest exile.

9 Tell Dhṛtarāṣṭra on my behalf:
'O bull-brave Bharata!
Whatever you need, however much,
you can take from me.'

10 Tell the earth-lord also
not to take to heart
the jealousy displayed
by bitter-minded Bhīma.

11 The earth-lord mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is our svāmī.
Convince him that he is the owner
of my wealth and Arjuna's wealth.

12 Let the rājā give copiously
to Brahmins and others.
Let him be free today of the debt
to his sons and well-wishers.

13 What's more – add this:
'O ruler of men!
I place in your hands my body
and all the wealth I have.
This you must know.
This admits of no doubt.' "

[XV:13:1-8]

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SECTION THIRTEEN

1 Advised by rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
incomparably intelligent Vidura
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
these profound words
of mahā-meaning:

2 "I carried your request
to mahā-radiant rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
He listened carefully, praising it,
and fully agreeing.

3 Mahā-energetic dreadful-deed-doer
Bībhatsu-Arjuna entrusts everything
in your hands: his mansions,
his wealth, his *prāṇa*-breath.

4 O rāja-ṛṣi! Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
entrusts the kingdom,
prāṇa-breath, wealth – everything –
in your hands.

5 'It is mahā-muscled Bhīma only
who remembers his sufferings,
and who gave his consent reluctantly,
breathing heavy sighs.

6 O rājā, dharma-cherishing rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and Bībhatsu-Arjuna
succeeded in persuading mahā-muscled Bhīma
to feel for you kindly.

7 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
requests that you overlook
the haughty and hostile pettinesses
that Bhīma confronts you with.

8 O ruler of men!
The dharma of Kṣatriyas is such.
Vṛkodara-Bhīma is obsessed with war
and Kṣatriya-dharma.

9 Arjuna and I implore you
again and again
to be gracious and overlook
wolf-waisted Bhīma's behaviour.
You are the owner
of all our wealth, O king.

10 O Bharata earth-lord!
Give as much wealth as you please.
You are the *īśvara*-lord
of our kingdom and our *prāṇa*-breath.

11 Give the required gifts to Brahmins
and the *aurdha-dehika* offerings
to your slain sons.'
Yudhiṣṭhira added:
'Gems, cows, male and female slaves,
goats and sheep –

12 Take these from us,
O finest of the Kauravas,
and give them to Brahmins.'
And obtain the king's permission,
and give also generously
to the sightless, poor and distressed,

13 And have large sabhās constructed
where food and drink
are plentifully supplied, Vidura.
Side by side,
see that other merit-producing deeds
are performed.

14 This was the message given to me
by rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
Advise me now what to do."

15 O Janamejaya! Vidura's words
pleased Dhṛtarāṣṭra immensely.
He decided to distribute mahā-charity
during the month of Kārtika.

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 O rājā Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana),
The words of Vidura
on behalf of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and Jiṣṇu-Arjuna
delighted Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

2 For the sake of Bhīṣma
and all his sons and well-wishers,
he invited thousands of Brahmins
and excelling ṛṣis,

3 And ordered the preparation
of elaborate food and drinks,
with gold and gems and jewels,
male and female slaves, sheep and goats,

4 And expensive blankets and diamonds,
and villages and fertile fields,
including horses and caparisoned elephants,
and attractive young virgins.

5 And the excellent king gifted them
for the sake of the dead,
naming Droṇa, Bhīṣma,
Somadatta, Bāhlīka,

6 Rājā Duryodhana and other sons,
one by one,
including all his well-wishers,
headed by Jayadratha.

7 Approved by Yudhiṣṭhira,
this śrāddha-yajña
became the occasion
for munificent wealth-*dakṣiṇās*
and gifting away
of jewels and gems.

8 Ordered by Yudhiṣṭhira,
scribes and tabulators
at the sacrifice
kept asking the old king:

9 "What more gifts are needed?
Everything is provided."
Whatever Dhṛtarāṣṭra required
was immediately supplied.

10 Ordered by the son of Kuntī,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
a request for a hundred
was supplied with a thousand,
and a request for a thousand
was supplied ten thousand.

11 Here was a king-cloud
showering the Brahmin-fields
with copious gifts of rain
for a fertile harvest.

12 O mahā-minded one!
All the four castes,
one after the other, were gratified
with abundant food and drink.

13 Vestures and wealth and jewels
were its billows,
the *mṛdaṅga*-drumbeats
its mahā-reverberations,
cows and elephants its *makara*-creatures,
various gems its whirlpools,

14 Villages and gifted lands
were its islands, –
diamonds and gold
were its rippling waves, –
such was the plentude
of the cornucopious Dhṛtarāṣṭra-ocean.

15 Mahārāja! This was the way
the king performed
the *aurdha-dehika* rites
for his sons and grandsons,
for his *pitṛ*-ancestors,
and for himself and Gāndhārī.

16 And it was only after
he became totally exhausted
did the ruler of men call an end
to the *dāna-yajña.*

17 O Kaurava Janamejaya!
That was how the rājā
completed the mahā-yajña.
Food and drink and *dakṣiṇās*
were plentiful, and actors and dancers
added to the festivity.

18 O bull-brave Bharata!
The gilt-giving lasted ten days,
freeing Ambikā's son Dhṛtarāṣṭra
of his debts to his sons and grandsons.

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 Ambikā's son rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
next morning, having decided
when to retire to the forest,
summoned to his side
the Pāṇḍava heroes.

2 Wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra, with Gāndhārī,
welcomed them.
It was the day of the full moon
in the month of Kārtika.
Brahmins learned in the Vedas
performed the departure rites,

3 The *agnihotṛ*-fire was propitiated;
dressed in tree-bark and deerskin,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra emerged from his mansion,
accompanied by his daughters-in-law.

4 As soon as the son
of Vicitravīrya emerged,
the Kaurava and Pāṇḍava ladies
broke into lamentation,
along with other royal ladies
of the Kaurava dynasty,
till the entire surroundings
resounded with the grief
of their loud wailing.

5 And rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
pūjā-respected his mansion
with fried paddy and flowers.
That Indra-among-men
pūjā-respected his attendants
and menials of the mansion
with material offerings,
after which he set out
to leave for the forest.

6 Then, *tāta,* dear one,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, trembling,
tears choking his voice,
offered him *prāñjāli,*
and, breaking down,
mahā-noisily said:
"*Sādho*! Virtuous one!
Why are you leaving us?"
He fell down in a swoon.

7 Foremost-of-the-Bharatas
Arjuna, burning with grief,
sighed again and again.
Recovering, Yudhiṣṭhira said,
"Don't!" and held him tight,
as one does a helpless man.

8 Vṛkodara-Bhīma
and Phālguna-Arjuna
Mādri's valiant twins,
Vidura and Sañjaya,
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra's son Yuyutsu
by a Vaiśyā maid,
Gautama-Kṛpa, Dhaumya,
and a host of Brahmins,
with grief-choked voices,

9 Followed, led by Kuntī
on whose shoulder rested
the hand of Gāndhārī
whose eyes were bandaged.
And behind
was rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
walking purposefully,
his hand resting
on Gāndhārī's shoulder.

10 Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
Sātvatī-Subhadrā,
Kauravī-Uttarā
who had just had a son,
and Citrāṅgadā
and other palace ladies,
with their daughters-in-law,
followed the retinue
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

11 The wails of those ladies,
O rājā, vibrated like
the crying of *kurarī*-cranes,
forcing Brahmins and Kṣatriyas
and merchants and Śūdras
to emerge from their homes.

12 They emerged from their homes,
O rājā, grief-stricken,
as once, in the past,
grief-stricken, O rājā,
they witnessed the Pāṇḍavas
leaving the palace
and going to the forest
after their ignominious
dice-game defeat.

13 And ladies who had never
emerged from their rooms
in the palace to see even
the sun or the moon
could now be seen
on the roads of the city
mourning the departure
of Kaurava-Indra Dhṛtarāṣṭra
to the mahā-forest.

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 What an incredibly mahā-clamorous spectacle!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
The men and women lamenting on the ground
and on the rooftops of their homes!

2 His hands folded in *añjali*, trembling,
the wise king wound his way slowly
through the royal main road
crowded with men and women.

3 He left the elephant-named city
by the Vardhamāna gate,
pleading with the people repeatedly
to return to their homes.

4 Gavalgaṇa's son, the Sūta Sañjaya,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mahā-mātra chief advisers,
and Vidura had made up their minds
to accompany the rājā to the forest.

5 Lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra
persuaded Kṛpa
and mahā-chariot-hero Yuyutsu
to return with Yudhiṣṭhira.

6 After the citizens went back,
Yudhiṣṭhira, with Dhṛtarāṣṭra's permission,
with the ladies of the inner apartments,
prepared also to return.

7 Noticing that his mother Kuntī
had decided to go to the forest,
Yudhiṣṭhira said to her:
"I will go with the rājā.

8 You should return to the city, O rānī,
with your daughters-in-law.
Dharmātmā rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra has decided
to practise tapasyā in the forest."

9 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira said this to her.
Her eyes filled with tears.
But Kuntī kept walking straight ahead,
holding Gāndhārī's hand.

10 Kuntī said: "Mahārāja!
Never think poorly of Sahadeva.
He has always, O rājā,
deeply loved me – and you too.

11 Always think of Karṇa,
who never retreated in battle.
His death on the battlefield
was the result of my stupidity.

12 My heart must be made of steel, my son,
that it does not shatter
into a hundred fragments,
not seeing the son of Sūrya.

13 But, O foe-exterminator,
what can I do now?
It was all my fault
that I hid from you
the fact that Karṇa
was Sūrya's son.

14 O crusher of foes!
O mahā-muscled one!
See that you and your brothers
offer generous gifts
to honour the memory
of the son of Sūrya.

15 O pulveriser of enemies!
Always please Draupadī.
O enhancer of Kaurava glory!
Bhīmasena, Arjuna, and Nakula –

16 Look after them. O rājā!
The family's future is in your hands.
Faithfully attending to the needs
of my mother-in-law and father-in-law,
always within earshot
of their least requirements,

17 I will smear my body with dust,
and practise tapasyā
in the forest, with Gāndhārī."
Vaiśampāyana continued:
Deeply disciplined dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
heard her; his brothers and he –
despite his wisdom – were disconsolate.
No one said a word.

18 He pondered deeply, briefly.
Then dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
sympathising with the anguish
of his mother, said to her:

19 "What is this that you have decided?
You should not speak like this.
I will never give you permission.
Have some feeling for me!

20 O my beautiful mother! *Priyadarśanī*!
A long time ago,
when we left our city,
you inspired us
with the story of Vidulā.
Do not forsake us now.

[XV:16:21-26]

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21 Enthused by your wise advice,
passed on to us
by bull-brave Vāsudeva-Krishna,
I have killed
the lords of this earth,
and I enjoy sovereign power.

22 What has happened to your wisdom?
Are you advising us
to abandon our Kṣatriya-dharma?
Shall we throw it all away?

23 O my illustrious mother! *Yaśasvinī*!
Leaving us,
leaving all your daughters-in-law,
leaving the kingdom
and living in a desolate forest,
how will you survive?
How will you live in a cave?
Have some feeling for us."

24 The words of her son
brought tears to Kuntī's eyes,
but she kept moving ahead.
Bhīma said to her:

25 "Kuntī, the kingdom is ours to enjoy.
Your sons have won it.
We are ready to perform
the duties of rāja-dharma.
Why are you so stubborn?
You are completely mistaken.

26 If this is what you want,
why did you provoke us
to lay waste this earth?
What makes you
abandon your children
and go to the forest?

27 We were born in the forest,
were we not?
Why did you bring us here
when we were boys?
Mādrī's two sons
are collapsing with grief.

28 O my illustrious mother! *Yaśasvinī*!
Be gracious.
Do not go to the forest.
Enjoy to the full
the Śrī-prosperity Yudhiṣṭhira has won
by the strength of his arms!"

29 *Bhāvinī* noble-minded Kuntī
was determined
to pass her days in the forest.
She paid no heed
to the profuse entreaties
of her sorrowing sons.

30 Dispirited Draupadī,
accompanied by Subhadrā,
followed her mahā-wise mother-in-law
who had resolved to live in the forest.

31 Mahā-wise Kuntī was firmly resolved
to go to the forest;
as she kept walking ahead,
she kept looking at her weeping sons.

32 The Pāṇḍavas, with all their attendants
and ladies of the inner apartments,
followed her as she departed.
Wiping her eyes, she advised them.

[XV:17:1-7]

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SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 "O mahā-muscled son of Pāṇḍu!"
Kuntī said.
"What you say is right.
You are all kings.
When you were dispirited in the past,
I inspired you to be brave.

2 You gambled away your kingdom.
Your happiness vanished.
Your family members laughed at you.
So I inspired you.

3 O my bull-brave sons!
You are Pāṇḍu's sons!
I did not want sullied
the honour of Pāṇḍu's sons.

4 You are all the equal
of illustrious Indra himself.
You are all god-like.
I did what I did
because I did not want you
seeking favours from others' faces.

5 Finest of dharma-dedicated rājās,
equal of Vāsava-Indra were you.
I did what I did because I did not want you
to waste away in the forest.

6 I did what I did
because I did not want
many-thousand-elephant-strong Bhīma
to diminish into nothingness.

7 I did what I did
because I did not want
Vāsava-Indra-equal Vijaya-Arjuna,
born after Bhīmasena,
to lose heart
and sit still and do nothing.

8 I did what I did
because I did not want
Nakula and Sahadeva,
who respect their guru-elders,
to become ill-nourished victims
of deprivation.

9 I did not want this amply-endowed
dark-complexioned large-eyed lady
who was insulted in the sabhā
to go unrevenged.

10 Before your very eyes, Bhīma,
this faultless-limbed lady,
staked and lost in the dice-game,
this faithful *strī-dharmiṇī*,
in her *strī-dharma* period,
trembling like a plantain tree,

11 Was dragged like a slave-girl
by stupid Duḥśāsana.
I realised then we were doomed –
this family was doomed.

12 And the Kauravas –
my father-in-law and all the others –
silently sat and watched her
crying like a *kurarī*-crane
and pleading and praying:
'Help me! O *nātha*! O lord! Help me!'

13 You are all kings!
When that sense-deprived
cruel and criminal Duḥśāsana
dragged her by her hair,
I was stupefied,
I almost fainted.

14 It was only to inspire you
that I narrated to you
the brave words of Vidula.
Keep that in mind, my sons.

15 I did what I did
so that the rāja-vaṁśa dynasty
of the sons of Pāṇḍu
would not become extinct.

16 How will the sons and grandsons
of a royal dynasty
attain the realms of those with good karma
if the dynasty is no more?

17 I can tell you, my sons,
I enjoyed the fruits of the kingdom –
of my magnanimous husband,
I gave away *mahā-dāna* charity,
I drank the juice of the soma
at ritual sacrifices.

18 What I told Vāsudeva-Krishna
was not to benefit myself.
I sent Vidulā's message through him
as an example for you.

19 O my sons! I do not desire
the kingdom won by you.
O radiant ones!
All I desire now
is to attain by my tapasyā
the celestial realm of my husband.

20 I will faithfully serve
my mother-in-law and father-in-law
and practise tapasyā with them
in their *vanavāsa* forest-life,
and in this way, Yudhiṣṭhira,
I will mortify my body.

21 O finest of the Kauravas!
Go back, with Bhīma and the others.
Be disciplined and dedicated to dharma.
May mahā-glory bless your mind and heart."

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 Hearing Kuntī's words, O incomparable rājā,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the defectless Pāṇḍava brothers
felt ashamed.
Accompanied by the princess of Pāñcāla,
they turned back.

2 With wails of mahā-lamentation,
the ladies of the inner apartments
mourned the departure of Kuntī
to the forest.

3 The sons of Pāṇḍu respectfully
offered *pradakṣiṇa* to rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
having failed in their attempts
to persuade Pṛthā-Kuntī to stay back.

4 Holding on to Gāndhārī and Vidura
for support,
the mahā-energetic son of Ambikā
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra said to them:

5 "Convince Yudhiṣṭhira's mother
Kuntī devī to go back.
What Yudhiṣṭhira says is the truth,
every word of it.

6 Why is she behaving so foolishly –
giving up the mahā-fruits
and the prosperity of her sons
to live in an inaccessible forest?

7 She can stay back in the kingdom
and practise tapasyā and strict vows
and give away liberally in mahā-charities.
Let her listen to what I say.

8 Gāndhārī! You are wise in dharma.
I have been more than happy
with the way our daughter-in-law
has devotedly served us.
It is up to you now
to convince her to go back."

9 These words of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
coupled with her own sage advice,
were repeated to Kuntī
by Subala's daughter Gāndhārī.

10 But steeped-in-dharma
steady-in-truth *satī* Kuntī
remained unmoved in her decision
to go to *vana-vāsa.*

11 Realising that her decision was final,
and seeing the Pāṇḍavas –
those incomparable Kaurava heroes –
turning back to the city,
the Kaurava ladies
burst into loud sobbing.

12 All the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
and of the daughter-in-law turned back.
Mahā-wise rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
proceeded to the forest.

13 Desolated with grief and despair,
the Pāṇḍavas, with their wives,
drove in their chariots
back to the city.

14 That day was when joylessness
descended on Hastinapura,
on all its citizens, young and old,
men, women and children.

15 It was as if all were debilitated.
The Pāṇḍavas looked woe-begone.
Without Kuntī, they looked
like calves without the mother-cow.

16 *Prabhu*-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra
arrived at the banks
of the Bhāgīrathī-Gaṅgā
after a mahā-arduous trek.

17 Excellent Brahmins learned in the Vedas
were entrusted with the task
of lighting the sacred fire
in the *tapovana* forest-of-tapasyā.
It burned with a brave
and beautiful brilliance.

18 The rāja-agni sacred fire was lit
and oblations offered
by the old monarch Dhṛtarāṣṭra
as ordained by tradition.

19 O Bharata descendant!
At *saṁdhyā*-time
the thousand-rayed sun was revered.
Sañjaya and Vidura
prepared a bed of kuśa-grass
for the rājā.

20 Beside the bed of the Kuru hero
they made another for Gāndhārī.
Happily, on a *kuśa*-grass bed,
next to Gāndhārī,

21 Slept Yudhiṣṭhira's mother Kuntī,
the noble-vowed lady.
Vidura chose to sleep
within earshot of the king.

22 The *yājaka* twice-born Brahmins
and other priests
were given suitable sleeping places.
Sacred chanting continued
and sacred fires were kept lit
all through the night.

23 Everywhere was the serene ambience
of a holy Brāhmī-night.
The night ended, they performed
the *krīya*-rites the next morning,

24 And after offering libations
in the *hutāgni* sacred fire,
they proceeded northwards
after that night of ritual fasting.

25 It was an experience of great hardship,
that first day in the forest,
because they remembered the grief
of the people of the city and the provinces.

SECTION NINETEEN

1 On the banks of the Bhāgīrathī-Gaṅgā
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
following the suggestion of Vidura,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
chose a sacred spot suitable
for virtuous settlers.

2 O bull-brave Bharata!
Many forest-dwelling Brahmins,
Kṣatriyas, merchants and Śūdras
came to meet the king.

3 Surrounded by them,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra pleased them
with the sweetness of his speech.
After pūjā-respecting them
in the appropriate manner,
he gave them leave to go.

4 In the evening the earth-lord
and illustrious Gāndhārī
purified themselves by bathing
in the waters of the Gaṅgā.

5 O Bharata descendant!
Vidura and the others also
bathed in the sacred *tīrtha*
and performed the purificatory rites.

6 After their purificatory bath, O rājā,
Kuntībhoja's daughter Kuntī
led her old father-in-law and Gāndhārī
to a spot on the bank of the Gaṅgā.

7 Where *yajāka*-priests had constructed
a *vedī*-altar for the rājā
The disciplined-in-truth king
offered sacred libations there.

8 From the banks of the Bhāgirathī-Gaṅgā
the old sense-controlled king,
respecting the tradition, with his followers
proceeded to Kurukṣetra.

9 There the supremely wise earth-lord
arrive at an āshram
where he met Śatayūpa,
an insightful rāja-ṛṣi.

10 That foe-crushing was once
the mahā rājā of Kekaya
who had given the kingdom to his son
and retired to the forest.

11 With him, rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
went to the āshram of Vyāsa.
Delighter-of-the-Kauravas
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra revered Vyāsa appropriately.

12 There the joy-of-the-Kauravas
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
received his *dīkṣā*-initiation
into the forest-life,
and returned with Śatayūpa
to that king's āshram.

13 Mahārāja! There the mahā-minded
rājā Śatayūpa
as advised by Vyāsa,
instructed rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
on how to live
one's life in the forest.

14 O rājā! Mahā-minded Dhṛtarāṣṭra
prepared himself
and his followers to lead
a life of tapasyā.

15 Mahārāja! Gāndhārī devī also,
along with Kuntī,
in bark-dress and deerskin,
took the same vows that he did.

16 Both disciplined their senses,
in deed and thought,
in word and eye,
and practised supreme tapasyā.

17 The flesh on his body
began to dry up,
his hair was matted,
he wore bark-dress
and deerskin, his mind
was freed of delusion –
he was like a maharṣi,
that earth-lord,
practising tapasyā.

18 And Kṣattā-Vidura,
wise-in-the-ways
of-dharma-and-artha,
along with Sañjaya
lovingly attended
on the king and his wife.
Lords-of-their-ātmans,
dressed like the king
in bark-cloth and deerskin,
they mortified their bodies
and devoted themselves
to the practice of tapasyā.

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SECTION TWENTY

1 To meet rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
arrived the excellent munis
Nārada and Parvata,
as well as Devala
of mahā-tapasyā,

2 Island-born Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
and his disciples,
Siddhas, Cāraṇas, inseeing intellectuals,
and the ripe-in-age
supreme-in-dharma rāja-ṛṣi
Śatayūpa.

3 Kuntī offered them pūjā, mahārāja,
as ordained by tradition,
and they were immensely gratified
with the reverence they received.

4 *Tāta*! Respected one!
The supreme ṛṣis delighted
mahātmā lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra
with various dharma-kathās.

5 After they had finished their stories,
down-to-earth Nārada
seized the opportunity
to present his straightforward kāthā.

6 "O rājā! There was a Kekaya ruler,"
began Nārada,
"a *śrī*-prosperous, fearless king
named Sahasracitya,
the grandfather
of Śatayūpa.

7 Entrusting the kingdom to the hands
of his supreme-in-dharma son,
the dharmātmā king Sahasracitya
retired to a life in the forest.

8 Completing his effulgent tapasyā,
that ruler of the earth,
a man of mahā-radiant personality,
attained Puraṁdara-Indra's realm.

9 O rājā! In Mahendra-Indra's realm
I met that rājā often.
All his demerits had been purified
by the heat of his tapasyā.

10 In the same manner,
with the power of his tapasyā
Bhagadatta's grandfather rājā Śailālaya
attained the realm of Mahendra-Indra.

11 O rājā! Another rājā Pṛṣadhra,
who resembled Vajradhara-Indra,
by the power of his tapasyā attained
the *nāka-pṛṣṭha* sky-ceilinged heaven.

12 And in this forest itself, O king,
Māndhātā's son
King Purukutsa
attained mahā-*siddhi* perfection –

13 The same king whose wife
was finest-of-rivers Narmadā.
It was in this forest
he attained the celestial goal.

14 O rājā! Another supreme-in-dharma rājā
named Śaśaloman
by his tapasyā in this forest
attained heaven.

15 You have come to this forest also,
O rājā,
on the advice of Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa.
In this *tapovana*
your tapasyā will reward you
with a near-impossible success.

16 O tiger-brave rājā!
Your tapasyā will bring you
and Gāndhārī the *śrī*-fulfilment
that is attained by mahātmās.

17 Your younger brother Pāṇḍu
remembers you always;
he lives in the realm
of Bala-slaying Indra.
His *śrī*-fulfilment, mahārāja,
will also be yours.

18 By her dedicated service
to you and illustrious Gāndhārī,
your daughter-in-law will attain
the realm of her husband.

19 She is the mother of Yudhiṣṭhira
who is Sanātana Dharma personified.
We see all this, O king,
with our celestial vision.

20 Vidura will enter the body
of mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira.
By the strength of his *dhyāna*-meditation,
Sañjaya will enter heaven."

21 After hearing these words
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the Indra-of-the-Kauravas
mahātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
intelligent Dhṛtarāṣṭra
was supremely pleased,
and praising the words
of Nārada, he offered him
pūjā unparalleled.

22 And the Brahmins, O rājā,
pūjā-praised Nārada.
The joy of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
enhanced their joy
and all others' joy
again and again.

23 All the excellent twice-born present
praised the words of Nārada.
The rāja-ṛṣi Śatayūpa
said to Narada:

24 "O mahā-radiant one! Mahā-dyuti!
Aho! You have enhanced
the śraddhā-devotion of the Kuru-rājā
and the śraddhā
of all who are present here,
and my śraddhā also.

25 You who receive the pūjā-respect
of the worlds!
There is something I must ask you
concerning Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
O deva-ṛṣi!
Listen to my request.

27 O mahā-muni!
You have told us all
about the realm of Mahendra-Indra
attained by various kings,
but not what will be attained
by Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

28 *Vibho!* Radiant one!
I would like to know
what realm he will attain –
and when he will attain it."

29 Celestial-visioned Nārada
of mahā-tapasyā
said to the people in the sabhā
these pleasing words:

30 "O rāja-ṛṣi!
I happened to be roaming casually
and chanced one day
to enter the realm of Śakra-Indra,
the consort of Śacī.
There I noticed lord-of-men Pāṇḍu.

31 O king! I heard them talking there
about king Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and the near-impossible tapasyā
that he was practising.

32 I heard from Śakra-Indra himself
that another three years
are left of the life-span
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

33 When that time-span ends,
king Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
accompanied by Gāndhārī,
will go to the palace of Kubera
and that rājā-of-all-rājās
will receive him with honour,

34 And adorn him with celestial ornaments,
and speed him away
in his will-propelled vehicle.
Son of a ṛṣi,
mahā-fortune-favoured, tapasyā-practising,
all-defects-purified

35 Is mahātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and he will fly
to the realms of the gods,
gandharvas and rākṣasas.
This is the best answer
to the question you have asked,

36 Because what you have asked
is a mahā-mystery even to the gods.
Because I have affection for you,
I have said all I could.
You have the wealth of the Vedas,
your tapasyā has purified you of blemishes."

37 Hearing deva-ṛṣi Nārada's sweet pronouncement
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and all else rejoiced.

38 Inspiring profound-of-mind Dhṛtarāṣṭra
with their words,
they left, seeking the path that leads
to success and fulfilment.

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 O rājā Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
The departure to the forest
of Indra-of-the-Kauravas Dhṛtarāṣṭra
plunged the Pāṇḍavas
into inconsolable grief, specially
when coupled with their mother's departure.

2 The citizens also mourned the absence
of ruler-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and the Brahmins talked constantly
of their king.

3 "How will our old rājā survive
in the unpeopled forest?
And mahā-fortune-favoured Gāndhārī
and Pṛthā-Kuntī?

4 A rāja-ṛṣi who relished luxuries –
what will he find
in that mahā-forest –
that wisdom-inseeing king
who has lost all his sons –
what except endless suffering?

5 What a desperate decision of Kuntī's –
alienating herself
from her sons and from royal prosperity –
to go and live in the forest!

6 And think of the condition of Vidura,
so devoted to his brother!
And Gavalgaṇa's son Sañjaya,
always at the service
of his royal master
who provides his *piṇḍa*-livelihood.

7 Worry and grief beset the minds
of the children and adult citizens.
This was the only topic
of popular discussion.

8 All the Pāṇḍavas were lost
in a welter of despair.
Their depression over the departure
of their old mother
was so intense that they could not stay
any longer in the city.

9 Their old *pitā* lord-of-men
who had lost all his sons,
maha-fortune-favoured Gāndhārī,
mahā-minded Vidura –

10 Their minds agonised for them
all the time –
even kingdom, women, study of the Vedas
could not divert them.

11 The more they recalled the ruler-of-men,
the more they suffered.
Again and again they recalled
the horrendous genocide.

12 O mahā-muscled Janamejaya!
Young Abhimanyu's slaughter
on the battlefield, the killing of Karṇa
who never fled a battlefield,

13 The butchery of Draupadī's sons
and of so many friends –
such memories drove away every joy
from the lives of those heroes.

14 O Bharata descendant!
They reflected on the earth
depopulated of her heroes
and robbed of her jewels –
and the Pāṇḍavas were deprived
of all peace of mind.

[XV:21:15-16; 22:1-6]

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15 Draupadī had lost all her sons,
and large-minded Subhadrā
her only son – two devīs
sharing a silent secret sorrow.

16 Hope surged in the *prāṇa*-life-breaths
of the Pāṇḍavas
only when they looked at Parīkṣit,
the son of Virāṭa's daughter;
then your *pūrva-pitāmaha* ancestors
flickered with life.

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 The joy of their mothers,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the tiger-brave Pāṇḍavas heroes
were overhelmed by grief.

2 Earlier they devoted themselves whole-heartedly
to rāja-kārya activities;
now they dissociated themselves
from work in the capital.

3 Such was their emotional depression
that nothing pleased them.
When approached, they did not respond,
nor reciprocated when pūjā-praised.

4 Formidable indeed and ocean-profound
were these heroes,
but grief had numbed their minds
and their sensitivities.

5 The thoughts of the sons of Pāṇḍu
revolved round their mother –
how will frail Pṛtha-Kuntī be able
to look after the old couple?

6 How will a helpless earth-lord
who has lost all his sons
survive with his wife in a forest
infested with wild beasts?

7 *All her relatives and friends dead,*
how will mahā-fortune-favoured Gāndhārī
survive with a blind old husband
in an unpeopled forest?

8 The Pāṇḍavas discussed all this,
and their anxiety aggravated.
They made up their minds
to meet Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the forest.

9 Sahadeva *praṇāma-ed* rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and said:
"Aho! I can see your heart
is set on going to the forest.

10 O Indra-among-rājās!
Because I deeply respect you,
I did not speak to you earlier
about going to the forest.
I am fortunate
to get this opportunity.

11 It is my great good luck
that I will today see
tapasyā-practising Kuntī
with matted hair,
my old mother sleeping
on kuśa-and-kāśa grass.

12 She who was the fortunate dweller
in places and mansions –
when will I get to see my mother
now deep in desolate despair?

13 O bull-brave Bharata!
Brief are the days,
uncertain the ways of us mortals.
Princess Kuntī –
daughter of a rājā –
living miserably in a forest!"

14 Finest-of-ladies Draupadī
heard Sahadeva say this,
and, O pūjā-respecting rājā,
the devī said:

15 "Lord of men! Janādhipa!
When will I get to see
Pṛthā-Kuntī devī?
Is she still alive?
How happy I will be
if I can see her alive!

16 O Indra-among-rājās!
May your mind always think thus.
May you always delight in dharma.
By giving us this chance
to meet Kuntī,
you bless as hugely.

17 O rājā! You should know
that all our daughters-in-law
are alert on their feet,
ready to proceed to the forest
for a darshan of Kuntī and Gāndhārī
and my father-in-law."

18 O bull-brave Bharata!
The words of Draupadī devī
made king Yudhiṣṭhira summon
all his army's generals.

19 "With chariots and elephants,
order my army to march out.
I am leaving for the forest
for a darshan of earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra."

20 To the supervisors of the quarters
of the palace ladies,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"Get ready carriages and palanquins.

21 Provisions and wardrobes and treasuries,
artisans and mechanics –
order them to proceed
to the Kurukṣetra āshram.

22 Let every facility and security be provided,
with no restrictions,
to any citizen who desires a darshan
of earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

23 Order cooks and kitchen-supervisors
to prepare every variety
of food and drink
and load them on carts and carriages.

24 Proclaim to the citizens
that we depart tomorrow.
Let there be no delays.
Make proper arrangements
for our stay in rest-houses
in the course of our journey."

25 These were the commands, O rājā,
issued by rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the eldest Pāṇḍava, to his brothers,
and early next morning
he started his journey
with the ladies and old men.

26 Outside the city,
he waited for five days
for the citizens to join him,
and then proceeded to the forest.

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 The finest of the Bharata rulers
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
ordered his army to march out
under the leadership
of Arjuna and other heroes
who were veritable Lokapālas.

2 "*Yogaḥ! Yogaḥ!* Be ready!
Time to march!" "Yoke the horses!"
Everywhere
the mahā-clamour to arms!

3 Some preferred palanquins,
others rode mahā-swift horses,
some came in golden chariots
of fire-like splendour.

4 Some came on huge elephants,
Indra-like leaders of herds,
some on camels; O lord of men,
the *nakhara-prāsa* warriors,
who fought with tiger-like claws,
walked the whole journey.

5 The citizens and the people
from outlying provinces,
eager to see rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
came in all manner
of conveyances and vehicles,
behind Kuru-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

6 Under orders of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
ācārya Gautama-Kṛpa,
the army general, rode with his army
to meet Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

7 Surrounded by the twice-born,
the Kuru-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was extolled by Sūtas, Māgadhas
and a host of other minstrels;

8 His head shaded
by a large white umbrella,
the perpetuator of the glory
of the Kaurava dynasty
marched at the head
of a mahā-array of chariots.

9 The son of the wind-god Pavana,
cruel-karma-creating
wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma
rode on the back
of a hill-huge elephant,
armed with various war-weapons.

10 Mādrī's twin sons Nakula and Sahadeva
rode on swift horses;
they were encased in armour
and carried war-flags.

11 Mahā-energetic, sense-disciplined Arjuna
came in a chariot,
excellently equipped, dazzling like the sun,
pulled by white horses.

12 The ladies, led by Draupadī,
came in curtained *śibikās;*
the palanquins were well guarded
by inner-apartment supervisors.

13 O bull-brave Bharata!
The air was filled with the music
of flutes and vīṇās,
accompanying the splendid force
of chariots and elephants
and horses.

14 O lord of the world!
The bull-brave Kaurava procession
wound slowly along the banks
of enchanting streams and rivers.

15 Mahā-energetic Yuyutsu
and the *purohita* Dhaumya,
ordered by Yudhiṣṭhira, stayed back
to protect the city.

16 Slowly threading his way
along the banks
of the supremely sacred Yamunā,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
crossed the river
and arrived at Kurukṣetra.

17 O Kaurava Janamejaya!
In the distance he saw the āshram
of the profoundly wise rāja-ṛṣi Śatayūpa
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

18 O bull-brave Bharata!
All the processionists rejoiced.
Their mahā-exultation accompanied
their entry in the forest.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 Alighting from their chariots
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
at some distance from the āshram,
the Pāṇḍavas, humbly,
on foot, proceeded
to meet rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

2 All the warriors accompanying them,
the subjects of the kingdom
and the wives of the Kaurava chiefs
followed them also on foot.

3 The Pāṇḍavas arrived at the āshram
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra –
an enchanting spot where deer roamed
amid groves of plantain trees.

4 Many strict-vowed devotees of tapasyā,
moved by curiosity,
florked to see the Pāṇḍavas
as soon as they arrived.

5 With tears in his eyes,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira asked:
"Where is my eldest *pitā*,
the glory of the Kaurava dynasty?"

6 They replied: "*Prabhu*-lord!
He has gone to the Yamunā
to bathe, fetch flowers,
and bring water."

7 Quickly the Pāṇḍavas on foot
followed the trail
that led to the Yamunā.
They saw the party returning.

8 Eager for a darshan of their *pitā*,
the Pāṇḍavas hurried their pace.
Sahadeva sprinted ahead
to meet Pṛthā-Kuntī.

9 Wise Sahadeva touched her feet
and broke into uncontrollable sobbing.
She saw her son,
and tears streamed down her cheeks.

10 She held and raised her son,
and hugged him warmly.
She informed Gāndhārī
of Sahadeva's arrival.

11 She saw the rājā,
Bhīmasena and Arjuna and Nakula.
Pṛthā-Kuntī swiftly
walked up to them.

12 As she hurried,
she held on to the sightless couple,
urging them to keep pace.
The Pāṇḍavas fell at her feet.

13 Touching them and hearing their voices,
wise and mahā-minded
prabhu-rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra recognised them,
and welcomed and comforted them.

14 Still in tears, following the tradition,
the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas
offered their respects to the king
and mother Gāndhārī.

15 Reassured by mother Gāndhārī,
the Pāṇḍavas regained their composure,
and took over the water-pots
from Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Kuntī.

16 The ladies of all those
lion-brave men
and the other ladies
of the royal establishment
and Hastināpura's citizens
beheld their earth-lord.

17 Calling out their names one by one,
Yudhiṣṭhira presented them
before lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and then offered his own pūjā-respect.

18 Surrounded by them, tears of joy
brimmed in the eyes
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Once more,
he imagined himself
in the Elephant-city.

19 Then Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and his daughters-in-law
offered their reverence
to earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
and the wise monarch,
Gāndhārī and Kuntī rejoiced.

20 Extolled by Siddhas and Cāraṇas,
he arrived at his āshram,
where hosts of visitors
waited patiently for his darshan,
like the night-sky
teeming with stars.

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SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 To meet rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers,
all of whom had eyes
resembling the petals of a lotus,
relaxed in the āshram,

2 Surrounded by maha-fortune-favoured
followers of tapasyā, from many lands,
all eager to have a darshan
of Pāṇḍu's sons of the Kuru-dynasty.

3 "What we would like to know," they asked,
"is who is Yudhiṣṭhira,
who Bhīma, Arjuna, and the twins,
and illustrious Draupadī."

4 Replying to them, the Sūta Sañjaya
indicated each by name,
including Draupadī
and the other Kaurava ladies.

5 "This is the Kuru-rājā,"
explained Sañjaya, "the eldest,
Jāmbū-gold-complexioned,
impressive as a mahā-lion,
long-nosed, with large
and copper-bright eyes.

6 And he who has the gait
of a musth elephant,
a hero-leading-Indra,
with skin that shines
like molten gold,
and broad shoulders
and massive rounded arms,
is wolf-waisted Vṛkodara,
Bhīma. See him there.

7 Next to him is the youthful
dark-skinned mahā-bowman,
lion-shouldered,
looking like an elephant-
leader of a herd –
valiant lotus-eyed Arjuna.

8 Next to Kuntī are the twins
Nakula and Sahadeva,
Viṣṇu and Mahendra-Indra.
In good looks and strength
and character, there is none
in the world their equal.

9 This lady with eyes
like the petals of a lotus,
who seems to have touched
the fringes of middle-age,
whose complexion glows
with blue-lotus loveliness,
a veritable devī
daughter of a god
is Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī;
she is Lakṣmī herself,
the human embodiment
of the goddess of prosperity.

10 Beside her is a girl
with golden complexion,
shining like the moon.
O excellent twice-born ones!
She is the sister
of the valiant *cakra*-wielder.

11 The other, whose complexion
glows like Jāmbū-gold,
is Pārtha-Arjuna's wife,
the daughter of the snake-king
Indra-of-serpents.
This girl here is as graceful
as a *madhūka*-flower.
She is Citrāṅgadā,
daughter of an Indra-like king.

12 Blue-lotus-complexioned,
this lady is the chief wife
of the wolf-waisted Pāṇḍava,
Vṛkodara-Bhīma.
She is the sister of the king
who always challenged Krishna.

13 And here is the daughter
of the Magadha rājā
known as Jarāsandha.
This champak-complexioned girl
if the wife of Sahadeva,
Mādravatī's younger son.

14 The dark-blue-lotus-skinned
girl next to her,
with lotus-lovely eyes,
sitting on the ground,
is the wife of Nakula,
Mādrvavatī's elder son.

15 The lady with the complexion
of molten gold,
with her son in her lap,
is rājā Virāṭa's daughter,
wife of Abhimanyu
who was unjustly killed,
deprived of his chariot,
by Droṇa and others,
secure in their chariots.

16 The ladies dressed in white,
with no marriage sign
in the parting of their hair,
are the widows of the hundred
sons of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
daughters-in-law
of the old blind monarch,
husbandless wives
and slain-son mothers.

17 I have named them all
in order of precedence.
You are all Brahmins
of refined intelligence
and transparent simplicity.
Because you asked me,
I indicated to you
these pure-hearted wives
of Indra-brave heroes."

18 After they had all left
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the old Kuru-rājā
asked, one by one, the sons
of god-like Pāṇḍu
about their health and welfare.

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19 The soldiers of the Pāṇḍavas
left the āshram-maṇḍala;
a convenient distance away,
they alighted from their chariots.
The elderly in the assembly,
the women and children –
after they had rested,
king Dhṛtarāṣṭra
enquired about their welfare.

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 "Mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira,"
asked Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
"are you, your brothers, and your subjects
contented and secure?

2 O king! Are your dependants,
your attendants,
and your guru-elders
happy and healthy?

3 Are they free from fear
and harassment?
Do you follow the examples
set by the ancient rāja-ṛṣis?

4 Is your treasury amply filled
without the imposition
of unjust and burdensome taxes?
Do you behave as you should
with your allies and foes
and with neutrals?

5 O bull-brave Bharata!
Are you generous
with gifts to Brahmins?
Are they grateful to you?

6 O Indra-among-rājas!
Forget citizens, servants, and kinsfolk –
do your enemies appreciate you?
Do you revere the gods and *pitṛs*?

7 Do you welcome guests
with food and drink?
Following their sva-karma,
do Brahmins tread the straight path –

8 Along with Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas,
Sūdras, and your kinsfolk?
I trust women, children and elders
have no cause to grieve or beg.

9 O bull-brave hero!
Are the ladies pujā-respected?
This dynasty of rāja-ṛṣis
is fortunate to have you as earth-lord.

10 Mahārāja! Is there any danger
of it losing its glory?"
To these relevant enquiries
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
dedicated-to-justice

11 And skilled-in-word-and-deed
Yudhiṣṭhira counter-enquired:
"O rājā! Your tapasyā, discipline and serenity –
are they progressing?

12 And my mother –
is she able to serve you untroubled?
O rājā, has her *vana-vāsa* forest-stay
been fruitful?

13 My eldest *mātā* Gāndhārī devī,
weakened with exposure
to wind and cold,
continued to practise severe tapasyā.

14 Does she still mourn the deaths
of her mahā-valiant sons
who were so devoted
to Kṣatriya-dharma?
Does she still blame us
for that wicked deed?

15 Where is Vidura, O rājā?
I do not see him here.
I trust Sañjaya is well
and stable in his tapasyā."

16 To lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira (said Vaiśampāyana)
Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied:
"Vidura is well, my son.
He is practising severe tapasyā.

17 He lives on air. He will not eat.
He is skin-and-bones.
His nerves and veins stand out.
Itinerant Brahmins
sometimes come upon him
in this desolate forest."

18 Hardly had Dhṛtarāṣṭra finished
than, matted-haired,
with pebbles in his mouth,
sky-clad *digvāsā*-naked,
smeared with filth,
covered with forest-dust,

19 Kṣattā-Vidura was spotted
in the far distance.
Yudhiṣṭhira was immediately informed.
Vidura kept looking
in the direction of the āshram,
and seemed to turn back.

20 King Yudhiṣṭhira ran after him.
He slipped inside the dense forest –
suddenly visible,
the next moment invisible.

21 "*Bho*! *Bho*! Vidura!
I am rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, so dear to you!"
Lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira
kept running after Vidura.

22 Finest-of-learned-men Vidura
stopped in a secluded spot
and supported himself, standing still,
leaning against a tree.

23 He was so emaciated –
he looked like a skeleton.
But mahā-intelligent Yudhiṣṭhira
recognised mahā-intelligent Vidura.

24 "I am Yudhiṣṭhira!" he exclaimed,
facing Vidura.
Saying this directly to Vidura,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira offered him pūjā.

25 Vidura gazed steadily
at rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
With the power of his yoga,
he united his gaze
with the gaze
of Yudhiṣṭhira.

26 Profoundly wise Vidura
unified his body
with the body of Yudhiṣṭhira,
his *prāṇa*-life-breath
with Yudhiṣṭhira's *prāṇa*,
his senses with Yudhiṣṭhira's.

27 By the power of his yoga,
Vidura entered dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
Vidura was ablaze
with a transcendent radiance.

28 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira saw
Vidura leaning against the tree;
Vidura's body looked lifeless,
but his eyes gazed steadily.

29 Yudhiṣṭhira felt a new power
suffusing his ātman
with manifold guṇa-virtues.
The mahā-energetic,
dharmarāja Pāṇḍava
remembered

30 His atman in the distant past.
O lord of the world!
Learned Yudhiṣṭhira remembered everything.
Mahā-energetic Yudhiṣṭhira
had heard of yoga-dharma
from Vyāsa himself.

31 Learned Dharmarāja
decided to perform the funeral saṁskāra
of Vidura by cremating the body.
He heard a voice proclaim:

32 "*Bho*! *Bho*! O rājā!
It is not right to cremate him.
His body is now in your body.
So says Sanātana Dharma.

33 O descendant of Bharata!
O foe-crushing hero!
He is in the Sāntanika realm
of the serene and the saintly.
He lived by the dharma
of a world-renouncing *yati*.
There is no reason
to grieve for him."

34 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira heard,
and turned back
and reported the entire episode
to rājā Vaicitravirya-Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

35 The radiant rājā and others,
including Bhīmasena,
everyone present,
were wonderstruck.

36 So delighted by the report
was rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
that he said to Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira:
"Accept from me
these offerings
of water, roots and fruits.

37 It is said, O rājā, that a guest
should be given
what one oneself enjoys."
Dharma's son said, "So be it."

38 He and his brothers drank the water
and relished the roots and fruits.
After that meal of roots,
fruits and water,
they relaxed near a tree-trunk
and passed the night.

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 O rājā! In that āshram of ascetics
of virtuous karma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
they passed the night
under the benign influence
of auspicious constellations.

2 Wonderful were their discussions
on dharma-and-artha,
with copious quotations from poems
and śruti-scriptures.

3 Leaving their mahā-luxurious beds,
O lord of men,
the Pāṇḍavas preferred the bare ground,
around their mother.

4 The heroes ate the same food
that was relished
by mahā-minded rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
that night.

5 After the passing of the night,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
performed his morning ablutions;
then, with his brothers,
he went round
the āshram-maṇḍala.

6 With Dhṛtarāṣṭra's permission,
he roamed the grounds happily
with his purohita, attendants
and the palace ladies.

7 Everywhere he went
he saw radiant *vedī*-fires,
around which were seated munis
chanting and offering oblations.

8 Beautified with forest-flowers,
smoke spiralled up
from offerings of ghee in the fire,
and the worshipping munis
looked like veritable personifications
of the Vedas.

9 *O prabhu*-lord!
Fearless deer grazed and relaxed,
and birds undisturbed
chirruped melodiously.

10 *Keka*-calls of *nīlakaṇṭha*-peacocks,
cooings of *dātyūhas*,
kokilas calling *kuhu-kuhu* –
what a heart-melting medley!

11 Eminent Brahmins reciting sonorously
from the sacred texts –
an enchanting place populated
by root-and-fruit partakers.

12 O rājā! Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira brought
all kinds of vessels with him,
to give away to tapasya-devotees –
made of gold and copper –

13 And, O lord of the earth,
deerskins and blankets also,
and *kamaṇḍala*-pots, O Bharata,
wooden plates, ladles and cups,

14 Irou utensils and numerous bowls
which, O king,
were taken by the āshram-inmates,
as many as each liked.

15 Dharmātmā rājā lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira
covered the entire āshram-maṇḍala
distributing all these gifts,
and returned to the main āshram.

16 He saw lord-of-the-earth rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
relaxing with Gāndhārī
after completing
his morning rituals.

17 Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
saw his mother Kuntī
seated at some distance from them,
like a humble dedicated disciple.

18 Respectfully he honoured the rājā,
announcing himself by name.
He was given permission to sit,
which he did, on a kuśa-grass mat.

19 O bull-brave Bharata!
Bhīma and the other Pāṇḍavas
touched the feet of the earth-lord,
and sat down with his permission.

20 How glorious he looked then –
the Kaurava rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
surrounded by the Pāṇḍavas –
like Bṛhaspati himself
dazzling with Brāhmī-splendour,
surrounded by the gods.

21 After they had sat down,
they were visited by mahā-ṛṣis,
among them Śatayūpa –
all dwellers of Kurukṣetra.

22 Mahā-energetic *bhagavan* Vyāsa,
respected even by deva-ṛṣis,
arrived there with his disciples to favour
earth-lord Yudhiṣṭhira with his darshan.

23 The valiant Kaurava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kuntī's son,
stood up, with Bhīma and others,
to welcome and revere them.

24 Surrounded by Śatayūpa and others,
Vyāsa said
to earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra:
"Please be seated."

25 Vyāsa sat down on a *kuśa*-grass mat
on a black deerskin
which had been specially placed
for his convenience.

26 All that excellent twice-born assembly,
glowing with splendour,
given permission by Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,
then took their seats.

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas sat down
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
Satyavatī's son Vyāsa
said to the assembly:

2 "O mahā-muscled Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
How is your tapasyā progressing?
O lord-of-men!
Does *vana-vāsa* agree with you?

3 O defect-free rājā!
Has your heart been freed
of the grief of your sons' slaughter?
Are they stable and serene,
all the perplexing sensations
that confuse the discerning mind?

4 Is your *buddhi*-intellect stable enough
to endure the rigours
of living in the forest?
And Gāndhārī, your daughter-in-law,
is she strong enough
to transcend her grief?

5 She is a *dharmārtha-darśinī* devī,
mahā-prajñā and *buddhimatī*,
supremely wise and percipient
in dharma-and-artha
and the meaning of life and death.
She should not grieve.

6 And Kuntī, O rājā,
who left her sons
to care for her guru-elders –
is she selflessly serving you?

7 Have you happily welcomed
Dharma's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma, Arjuna and the twins?
Are they now happily reconciled?

8 O lord of men!
Are you happy seeing them?
Is your mind and heart pure,
free of fault-finding?
Has your plenitude of knowledge
fulfilled you?

9 O Bharata mahārāja!
Supremely cherished by all mankind
are these three:
not wishing anyone ill,
speaking the truth,
and rising above anger.

10 O Bharata! Do you find
your life in the forest
tiresome and confusing?
Are you satisfied
with growing the food
that you daily eat?
Do you have doubts
about your decision to fast?

[XV:28:11-17]

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11 You surely know that Vidura,
the embodiment of Dharma,
the supreme mahātmā,
has left this world.

12 It was the curse of Māṇḍavya
that made Vidura
take birth as Dharma,
a mahā-yogi,
a man of mahā-*buddhi*,
a mahā-minded mahātmā.

13 The power of intellect of bull-brave Vidura
was not equalled
even by Bṛhaspati among the gods,
nor Śukra among the anti-gods.

14 When Māṇḍavya ṛṣi cursed
Sanātana Dharma Vidura
with the power of his tapasyā,
he did so only
by diminishing his own hard-earned power
to curse others.

15 Ordered by Brahmā,
and by my own will-power,
I fathered mahā-minded Vidura
in the field of Vicitravīrya.

16 Your brother Vidura, mahārāja,
was a Sanātana Devadeva,
an eternal god-of-gods.
The learned know him as Dharma
because he was steadfast
in *dhāraṇa*-concentration
and devoted
to *dhyāna*-meditation.

17 Truth, sva-dharma,
self-control, peace of mind,
ahiṁsā, gift-giving, tapasyā –
these constitute sanātana-timelessness.

18 By the power of his yoga,
supremely wise
and limitlessly percipient Vidura,
known as Dharma,
procreated Kuru-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
O king.

19 Like fire, like wind, like water,
like earth, like *ākāśa*-ether,
Dharma exists
both here and hereafter.

20 O Indra-among-rājās!
Dharma travels everywhere,
Dharma pervades everything.
Dharma can be seen
only by the god-of-gods,
by perfected Siddhas,
and by those who are freed
of all demerits and defects.

21 Dharma is Vidura,
and Vidura is Pāṇḍava-Yudhiṣṭhira,
who you see before you, O king,
standing ready to serve you.

22 Your supremely percipient
mahātmā brother Vidura,
by the power of his mahā-yoga,
has entered the body
of mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the son of Kuntī.

23 O bull-brave Bharata!
I will do my best
to fulfil you also.
I have come here,
my son, *putraka*,
to remove all doubts.

24 I will show you something now –
the fruits of my tapasyā –
something that even the mahā-ṛṣis
have never done before.

25 O immaculate earth-lord!
What do you want of me?
What do you want to see or hear?
You have only to ask."

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 "Brahmin! During the *vana-vāsa* forest-life,"
asked Janamejaya,
"of tiger-brave earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
with his daughter-in-law Kuntī,

2 After Vidura attained *siddhi*-fulfilment
and permeated the body
of dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
and all the Pāṇḍavas
were spending their days
in the āshram-maṇḍala,

3 What was the marvellous feat
performed by Vyāsa,
the supremely energetic mahā-ṛṣi?
Tell me.

4 Never-remiss-in-dignity
Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira –
how many days did that king
stay in the forest?

5 O immaculate *prabhu*-lord!
What food nourished them –
the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas, their soldiers,
and the ladies of the inner apartments?"

6 Given permission by the Kaurava rājā
(replied Vaiśampāyana),
the Pāṇḍavas, O rājā,
passed their days comfortably,
subsisting on a variety
of food and drink.

7 They spent a month there,
O immaculate one,
with the soldiers and palace ladies.
It was at this time
that Vyāsa arrived
and met them.

8 He sat next to king Dhṛtarāṣṭra;
they sat around him, O rājā,
and many munis gathered round them,
listening to their discussions.

9 There was Nārada, and Parvata,
and Devala of mahā-tapasyā,
and, O Bharata, Viśvāvasu,
Tumburu and Citrasena.

10 With the permission of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
the Kaurava-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
of mahā-tapasyā
offered them appropriate pūjā-respect.

11 They accepted Yudhiṣṭhira's pūjā,
and all of them
relaxed on peacock-feather seats
and other excellent mats.

12 O enhancer of Kaurava glory!
After they were seated,
mahā-minded rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Pāṇḍu's sons took their seats.

13 Gāndhārī, Kuntī, Draupadī,
Subhadrā of the Sātvatas,
and other ladies
then took their seats.

14 O king! Such celestial conversation!
The topics concerned dharma,
the ṛṣis of *purāṇa*-antiquity,
and gods and antigods.

15 When that kathā-conversation ended,
finest-of-eloquent speakers Vyāsa,
addressing once more
the wisdom-inseeing lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra –

16 Wisest-in-the-ways-of-the-Vedas
mahā-energetic Vyāsa said,
pleasantly: "O Indra-among-rājās!
Tell me what is in your heart –

17 The grief for your dead sons
that agonises you.
the pain that is always
in Gāndhārī's heart,

18 In the hearts of Kuntī, mahārāja,
and Draupadī –
The burning pain of her son's death
that is endured

19 By Subhadrā, Krishna's sister –
I know, I know.
When I learnt of the meeting here,
O king,

20 I hurried here, O Kaurava-delighter,
to dispel your unease.
The gods, gandharvas
and mahā-ṛṣis

21 Will witness today the *vīrya*-glory
of my long-practised tapasyā.
What boon do you desire,
O mahā-wise one?

22 I will grant you whatever you wish.
Experience the fruits of my tapasyā!"
Immeasurably percipient Vyāsa said this.
Indra-among-rājās Dhṛtarāṣṭra

23 Reflected briefly before deciding
what he should say.
"*Dhanyo'asmi*! I am blessed!
My life is fulfilled!

24 I have mixed in the company
of the good and the saintly.
You have made possible for me
to attain my ātman's goal –

25 For you are rich with tapasyā,
you are like Brahmā himself!
There is no doubt at all –
your darshan has purified me.

26 O immaculate ones!
No more do I fear
what happens to me in the after-life.
But when I think
of the ill deeds perpetrated
by my wicked-minded son,

27 When I recall them,
my mind agonises.
Criminal-minded,
he persecuted the innocent Pāṇḍavas.

28 He laid waste the earth –
her horses, men, elephants.
Mahātmā rājās,
many lords of many lands

29 Came as my son's allies –
for what? – only to die.
Their dear fathers, their wives,
their very life-breaths, their dreams –

30 They left them behind,
and entered the kingdom
of the rājā of death.
What have they gained, O Brahmin,
they and their friends
who died for their sake?

31 And my sons and grandsons also
who perished in the war?
And my heart agonises for the part
I played in the killing of mahā-powerful

32 Bhīṣma, Śāntanu's son,
and ripe-in-years Droṇa,
finest of the twice-born ones.
My wicked-minded sons,
bent on evil deeds,
fools all of them,

[XV:29:33-39]

33 Greedy to rule the earth,
extinguished the shining glory
of our family
Day and night,
I think of all this,
and I burn, I burn.

34 Pain and grief are all I have.
Peace of mind I have none.
These thoughts afflict me, father,
and peace of mind deserts me."

35 O Janamejaya! (continued Vaiśampāyana)
The lament of the rāja-ṛṣi
plunged Gāndhārī
in a bout of fresh grief.

36 Kuntī too, and Draupadī,
and Subhadrā
and other lovely Kaurava daughters-in-law
began sobbing afresh.

37 Her eyes covered with a bandage,
Gāndhārī devī,
afflicted with grief for her dead sons,
folded her hands in *prāñjali*
and stood facing
her father-in-law.

38 "O bull-brave muni!" she said.
"*Vibho*! Radiant one!
For sixteen yeas this rājā
has mourned
the deaths of his sons.
Peace has deserted him.

39 He mourns the deaths of his sons,
he sighs heavily,
the earth-lord cannot sleep at night,
O mahā-muni.

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40 With the power of your tapasyā
you can bring forth new worlds.
Why not show this rājā his sons
who are now in the other world?

41 And Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī –
she has lost all her sons,
she has lost all her relatives.
The dearest to me
of all my daughters-in-law –
how she suffers!

42 And the sister of Krishna,
such a liberal-minded, sweet-speaking girl, –
how deeply she mourns
the slaughter of her son!

43 And Bhūriśravas's wife
who is respected by all –
that large-minded lady
devastated by her husband's death . . .

44 And her father-in-law,
wise Bāhlika, also dead,
that enhancer-of-Kaurava-glory.
Bhūriśravas's father Somadatta
also dead,
slain in the mahā-battle!

45 And one hundred sons killed in the war,
never-turning-their-backs-in-battle,
sons of your mahā-intelligent son,
Śrīmān Dhṛtarāṣṭra . . .

46 Demented by grief
are their hundred widows,
and their grief aggravates
the rājā's grief and my grief.

47 Afflicted by mahā-calamity,
O mahā-muni,
they gather round me.
The mahā-chariot-heroes,
the brave mahātmās –
my fathers-in-law –

48 Somadatta and others –
prabhu-lord, where are they now?
Be gracious, *bhagavan*, revered one,
remove the earth-lord's grief,

49 Your daughter-in-law Kuntī's grief,
and my grief."
Gāndhārī finished; and Kuntī,
emaciated with vows and fasting,

50 Silently thought of her sun-born son,
born to her in secret.
Boon-granting ṛṣi Vyāsa,
dūra-śravaṇa-darśana Vyāsa,
far-sighted
and far-hearing,

51 Saw the grief of Kuntī devī,
mother of Savyasācī-Arjuna.
Vyāsa said to her:
"What would you like done?

52 What is there in your mind,
O mahā-fortune-favoured one?"
Kuntī lowered her head,
praṇāma-ed her father-in-law,

53 And revealed to him, shyly,
These details from her past life.

SECTION THIRTY

1 "*Bhagavan*, revered one," began Kuntī,
"you are my father-in-law,
you are to me a god-image
above all god-images.
You are my god above all gods.
Listen to my truth.

2 A short-tempered, tapasyā-following Brahmin
named Durvāsas
came to my father for *bhikṣā*-alms.
I fulfilled all his desires.

3 I was pure in mind, perfect in deed,
I overlooked his improprieties,
I did not lose my temper
though he gave me mahā-reasons to do so.

4 So pleased was that mahā-muni
with my unceasing service
that, when his work was done,
he offered me a boon.
'You must accept what I give you,'
he insisted.

5 Afraid he might curse me,
I said to the Brahmin, 'So be it.'
The twice-born ascetic
said to me again:

6 'Gracious girl! *Bhadre*!
Lovely-limbed girl! *Śubhānane*!
You will be the mother of Dharma.
Summon any gods you desire.'

7 The Brahmin said this, and vanished.
I was stupefied.
But the words I could not forget;
they kept swirling in my mind.

8 From my terrace one day, where I sat,
I saw the sun rising.
I remembered the words of the ṛṣi.
Day and night I longed for the sun.

9 I was only a young girl,
I was doing nothing wrong,
I summoned before me
the thousand-rayed deity.

10 One ātman, but two bodies –
one on earth, one in the sky;
one lighting up the sky,
one facing me on earth.

11 He saw me trembling,
    and he said to me:
‘Ask any boon from me.’
    I *praṇāma-ed* him,
bowing my head very low.
    ‘Please go away,’ I said.

12 ‘And make my coming fruitless? No!’
    said the fierce-flaming one.
‘I will reduce to ashes
    you and the boon-granting Brahmin!’

13 Because I wanted to protect the Brahmin
    who had done nothing wrong,
from his curse, I said: ‘Deva! Divine one!
    Give me a son who is like you.’

14 The radiant one enchanted me,
    and penetrated me with his energy.
Saying, ‘You will have such a son,’
    he returned to the sky.

15 Keeping this hidden from my father,
    I stayed in the inner apartments.
My secretly-born baby son was Karṇa,
    I floated him away on the river.

16 By the grace of the sun-god,
    I remained a virgin.
Everything turned out, O Brahmin,
    exactly as the ṛṣi had predicted.

17 O Brahmin ṛṣi! I was foolish,
    he was my son,
and I cast him away.
    How my body burns
when I think of this!
    You of course know this.

18 *Bhagavan!* Revered one!
    Wrong or otherwise,
this is what I did.
    I have told you everything.
All I ask of you is –
    free me of my burning pain.

19 O incomparable muni!
O immaculate one!
You already know
what is in the rājā's heart.
Grant him also
whatever he most desires."

20 Wisest-in-the-ways-of-the-Vedas Vyāsa
heard Kuntī and said:
"*Sādhu*! You have spoken well.
What you hope for, will happen.

21 No fault attaches to you.
You remained a virgin.
The gods have superhuman powers.
They can enter human bodies.

22 There are gods who father children
by thought alone,
and by word, sight, touch, and sexual union –
these five ways.

23 God-dharma does not defile
human-dharma.
Keep this always in mind, Kuntī.
Is your mind's fever calm now?

24 The path of the powerful
is always right.
Everything connected with the powerful
is pure.
Everything the powerful do,
is dharma.
Everything there is,
belongs to the powerful."

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SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 "You are fortunate, Gāndhārī," said Vyāsa.
"Tonight you will see
your sons, brothers and friends.
Your daughters-in-law
will see their husbands once again,
as if waking from sleep.

2 Kuntī will see Karṇa,
and Subhadrā Yādava-Abhimanyu.
Draupadī will see her five sons,
her father and her brothers.

3 Even before you asked me,
I had this in my mind.
You, rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Pṛthā-Kuntī
kept urging me.

4 Do not grieve for the mahātmās
who perished in battle –
they were all bull-brave upholders
of Kṣatriya-dharma.

5 O lady without blemish! *Anindite*!
One cannot prevent the gods
from doing what they will do.
Different aspects of the gods
descended on the earth
to fulfil the mission of the gods.

6 Gandharvas, apsarās, *piśācas*,
Guhyakas, rākṣasas,
merit-purified people,
perfected Siddhas, deva-ṛṣis,

7 Gods, Dānava antigods,
fault-free deva-ṛṣis –
all these perished
on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.

8 It is heard that the wise
gandharva-rāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra
appeared in the world of mankind
as lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

9 Possessor-of-undeteriorating-glory
rājā Pāṇḍu
represented the hosts of Maruts.
Kṣattā-Vidura
and Yudhiṣṭhira
were forms of Dharma.

10 Know Kali-yuga to be Duryodhana,
and Dvāpara to be Śakuni.
You who enchant the eyes!
Duḥśāsana and the others were rākṣasas.

11 Foe-crushing powerful Bhīmasena
is an aspect of the Maruts.
Know Pārtha-Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
to be the ṛṣi Nara.

12 Hṛṣīkeśa-Kṛṣṇā is Nārāyaṇa,
the twins are the two Aśvins.
O grace-dispensing lady! *Kalyāṇi*!
You who enchant the eyes!
Born to foment friction
and conflict among people
was Bhāskara Karṇa,
the son of the sun-god.

13 And the Pāṇḍava-son who gladdened all,
slaughtered by six mahā-chariot-heroes –
Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu –
appeared here as Soma
divided in two – one half the moon,
the other half on earth.

14 O lovely lady! *Śobhane*!
One half of the sun-god Āditya,
the finest-of-fiercely-flaming-fires,
appeared as Karṇa.
Know Karṇa to be Tapana
the sun on the earth.

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15 Know also that Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
born, like Draupadī,
from Pavaka the sacred fire,
to be a form of Agni.
And Śikhaṇḍin
appeared as a rākṣasa.

16 Know Droṇa to be Bṛhaspati,
and Drauṇi-Aśvatthāman
to be an aspect of Rudra-Śiva.
Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma
was one of the Vasus
born as a human.

17 O mahā-learned lovely lady!
Their mission completed,
the gods have left the world
and returned to heaven.

18 I will dispel today the grief and fear
that agitates your hearts
for all those who have gone
to the other world.

19 Proceed – all of you –
to the Bhāgīrathī river,
and see all those
who perished on the battlefield."

20 All of them heard Vyāsa say this
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
They raised mahā-loud lion-roars,
and proceeded to the Gaṅgā.

21 With his ministers and the Pāṇḍavas,
with tiger-brave munis
and hosts of gandharvas,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra arrived at the river.

22 That ocean of humanity
camped on the banks of the Gaṅgā,
each group selecting
a convenient location.

23 Wise rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
with the Pāṇḍavas,
chose a place suitable
for ladies and the elderly.

24 It was only one day,
it seemed to be one year.
They waited for the night,
for a vision of the dead princes.

25 The sun dipped
in the sacred Asta hills in the west.
They took their purificatory baths,
and performed the sacred evening rituals.

SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 Night came (continued Vaiśampāyana),
they completed their *kriyā*-rituals,
and then all, in a group,
approached Vyāsa.

2 Along with the Pāṇḍavas, dharmātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
pure of heart
and with singleminded concentration,
sat near him with the ṛṣis.

3 Gāndhārī and royal ladies
took their seats,
and so did the citizens and others
in order of priority.

4 Mahā-muni mahā-energetic Vyāsa
purified himself
in the sacred waters of the Bhāgīrathī,
and invoked all the warriors –

5 All who fought for the Pāṇḍavas
and those who sided with the Kauravas –
all the mahā-fortune-favoured rājās
of so many territories.

6 What a tumultuous clamour
sprang from the waters!
It resembled, O Janamejaya,
the combined uproar
of the battling armies
of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas.

7 Thousands upon thousands of earth-lords,
headed by Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
along with their armies
rose from the waters.

8 Virāṭa and Drupada,
with their sons and armies;
Draupadī's sons, Subhadrā's son,
and the rākṣasa Ghaṭotkaca;

9 Karṇa and Duryodhana,
and the mahā-chariot-hero Śakuni,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mahā-powerful son Duḥśāsana
and his other sons;

10 Jarāsaṁdha's son, Bhagadatta,
valiant Jalasaṁdha;
Bhūriśravas, Śala, Śalya,
Vṛṣasena and his younger brother;

11 Prince Lakṣmaṇa,
Dhṛṣṭadyumna's sons,
the sons of Śikhaṇḍin,
Dhṛṣṭaketu and his younger brother;

12 Acala and Vṛṣaka
and the rākṣasa Alāyudha;
Bāhlīka, Somadatta,
the earth-lord Cekitāna; –

13 All of them rose from the waters
of the river,
such a multitude of men,
so many of them –
impossible to name them all –
their bodies flashing with glory.

14 All the earth-lords uniformed exactly
as they went into battle,
under the same war-flags,
riding the same chariots,

15 Wearing celestial vestures,
and sporting dazzling earrings.
No more bitterness,
no more *ahaṁkāra*-ego,
no more hatred,
no more jealousy.

16 Gandharvas extolled them,
vandī-bards sang their feats.
They were divinely dressed
and divinely garlanded,
and groups of apsarās
surrounded them.

17 By the power of his tapasyā,
pleased with Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Satyavatī's son Vyāsa-muni
gave him super-sensuous sight.

18 Gifted with her power of divine knowledge,
illustrious Gāndhārī
saw all her sons
who had perished in the war.

19 All the assembly stood there
and marvelled –
what an incredible spectacle!
what mahā-exquisite horripilation!

20 What a mahā-festival
of joyful men and women!
Like a mind-numbing magical mural,
like a picturesque painting on cloth!

21 O finest of the Bharatas!
Witnessing that spectacle
with his super-sensuous sight
obtained by the grace
of Vyāsa-muni,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra swelled with joy.

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 Anger-free and jealous-free
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
freed of all faults
those finest of men gathered

2 And abided by the auspicious rites
recommended by the Brahma-ṛṣis.
Happy were their hearts,
they were like the gods in heaven.

3 Son met father,
son met mother,
wives met husbands,
brother met brother, O rājā,
loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend
met *sakhā*-friend.

4 Joyfully the Pāṇḍavas met
mahā-bowman Karṇa,
Saubhadra-Abhimanyu
and all the sons of Draupadī.

5 O lord of the earth!
Lovingly were the Pāṇḍavas
reconciled with Karṇa
in a reunion of hearts.

6 O bull-brave Bharata!
By the grace of Vyāsa-muni,
the Kṣatriya warriors
cast off their self-pride

7 And their mutual hostility
and basked in their new-found friendship.
All the guru-elders
and friends and relatives

8 Of the tiger-brave Kaurava dynasty –
all the sons and earth-lords
passed the night sweetly reconciled
in their forest surroundings.

9 Such happiness!
To the kings it was like heaven.
No grief, no fear,
no suspicion, no malice,
no ill-fame –

10 Such was the blissful communion
of the warriors,
O bull-brave Bharata.
Fathers and brothers,
husbands and sons –
all of them met

11 The ladies of the gathering,
whose grief changed to joy.
The virile heroes passed that night
with their young ladies,

12 Lovingly embracing each other;
and all too soon it was time to depart.
Bull-brave Vyāsa-muni
gave them leave to go –

13 And in a flash they disappeared,
those mahātmās,
in the sacred waters of the Bhāgīrathī,
in front of their eyes –

14 Chariots fluttering with war-flags
returning to their abodes.
Some went to the realm of the gods,
some to the realm of Brahmā,

15 Others to the realm of Varuṇa,
still others to Kubera,
and other kings returned to the realm
of the sun-god Vaivasvata.

16 Some rākṣasas and *piśācas*
returned to Uttara-kuru.
They all went their varied ways,
in their vehicles, the gods

17 And the mahātmās with their hosts
of faithful followers.
After they had vanished,
the mahā-muni standing in the river,

18 Stable-in-dharma mahā-energetic Vyāsa,
wishing the welfare of the Kauravas,
said to all the Kṣatriya ladies
who had lost their lords:

19 "Now is the time for all
the illustrious ladies,
who seek to dwell
in the realms attained
by their departed husbands,
to discipline their senses,
and without hesitation
plunge quickly in the sacred
waters of the Jāhnavī."

20 Full of *śraddhā*, the lovely-limbed ladies,
taking the permission
of their father-in-law-Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
entered the Jāhnavī's waters.

21 O lord of the world!
Freed of the fetters of mortality,
the *sādhvī*-chaste ladies
were united with their husbands.

22 This was the manner in which
the husband-devoted Kṣatriya ladies
communed with their husbands
in the realms of their husbands.

23 In celestial shapes,
wearing celestial ornaments,
celestially garlanded,
in celestial robes,
they proceeded
to the realms of their husbands.

24 Of sterling character
and guṇa-virtue-endowed,
all their worries dispelled,
they went in their chariots
to the felicitous realm
of their deserving.

25 Dharma-cherishing dharma-*vatsala*
boon-granting Vyāsa
granted each and every person
their heart's desire.

26 Immeasurable was the delight of all
who had come from many lands
when they heard of the union
of mortals with immortals.

27 Whoever listens to this account
of loving reconciliation
obtains in this life and the after-life
whatever he loves.

28 He will not struggle for livelihood,
he will be friends with his relatives.
A dharma-dedicated man of learning
reciting this to learned others

29 Will acquire fame in this world
and auspiciousness in the next.
O Bharata! The deeply studious,
the yoked-to-tapasyā,

30 The simple and straightforward person,
the self-disciplined,
the cleansed-of-demerits-by-charity,
the honest and sincere,
the pure-minded, the serene-hearted,
violence-free, falsehood-free,

31 The believer, the strong-in-*śraddhā*,
the firm-in-fortitude,
listening to this marvellous *parva*,
will attain the supreme goal.

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SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Joy suffused
the learned king Janamejaya
when he heard the account
of his ancestors' comings and goings.

2 Delighted, he questioned further
regarding their reappearance.
"How can the dead return
and offer us their darshan
in the very same bodies
which they had discarded?"

3 Finest-of-twice-born-speakers
renowned Vaiśampāyana,
Vyāsa's disciple,
replied to king Janamejaya:

4 "King! It goes without saying
that karma has consequences.
Our bodies are nothing
but products of our karma.

5 The five mahā-elements are eternal
because they shelter
in the shadow of the Lord-of-elements.
It is the non-eternal
that gets destroyed,
not the eternal.

6 Pure karma is the true karma,
it flowers into the finest fruit.
Trapped in impure karma,
the ātman experiences joy and sorrow.

7 But the ātman is *kṣetrajña*,
the knower-of-the-body.
That goes without saying.
It is always what it is.
The change-less experiencer is eternal,
it is not affected by transience.

8 Until its karma is exhausted,
a body retains its own shape.
When its karma is exhausted,
its shape is different.

9 Sense-objects and physical experiences
congregate into the individualised body.
The true knowers are those who know
the difference between transient and eternal.

10 This *śruti*-wisdom can be heard
in the performance
of the Aśvamedha ritual
when the *prāṇa*-life-breath
of the sacrificed horse
is celebrated in the chant
to exist eternally
in the after-world.

11 If you find it agreeable, O earth-lord,
I will speak for your benefit.
Before beginning a yajña,
you must surely have heard
of the different paths
favoured by the gods.

12 The moment you commence a yajña,
the gods become gracious to you.
The gods become the lords of the journey
from the transient to the eternal.

13 Only through yajña-sacrifice and adoration
does the changeless eternal here
unite with the changeless eternal hereafter.
The five basic elements
are eternal; eternal also
is the ātman or *puruṣa*.

14 Useless is the view of the person
who sees disunity everywhere.
If you ask me,
he is foolish who grieves
when he feels alienated
by the fragmentation he sees.

15 If you see *viyoga*-separation as wrong,
you should reject yoga-union also,
for the eternal is neither attached
nor is it detached.
Profound indeed is the grief
of *viyoga*-separation.

16 Never free from the misguidance
of his *abhimān*-ego
is he who is always involved
in me-and-the-other.
Only he is free of delusion
who is one with the other.

17 The invisible becomes the visible
and is again transformed
into the invisible.
I do not know him,
he does not know me.
I am not fit to renounce.

18 You are your body's *īśvara*-lord,
you get the fruits
that accrue from your karma.
The mind gets the fruits
of mental karma,
the body of body-karma."

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 O enhancer of Kaurava glory!
(Vaiśampāyana continued)
By the grace of the ṛṣi,
for the first time in his life
the king had a darshan of his sons,
all of them looking like himself.

2 That rājā was profoundly learned
in rāja-dharma,
in the Brahma-upaniṣad
and in matters relating to the intellect.

3 Mahā-wise Vidura had perfected himself
by the power of his tapasyā,
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra by his association
with tapasyā-dedicated Vyāsa.

4 "I will believe all that you say,"
said Janamejaya,
"if boon-granting Vyāsa offers me
a vision of my *pitā*-ancestor,
exactly as he was, dressed as he was,
as old as he then was.

5 Delight me, fulfil me,
bless me with that certainty!
May the grace of the glorious ṛṣi Vyāsa
grant me that fullness!"

6 King Janamejaya said this
(continued Santi),
and percipient, illustrious Vyāsa
invoked and summoned Parīkṣit.

7 King Janamejaya beheld his father,
rājā Parīkṣit,
celestial, Śrī-radiant,
looking as then, dressed as then.

8 With him were mahātmā Śamīka
and his son Śṛṅgi.
Janamejaya also saw the ministers
who accompanied the rājā.

9 Overjoyed, rājā Janamejaya performed
the *avabhṛta* yajña ritual,
bathing his father in the sacred water,
and similarly purifying himself.
As soon as the ceremony concluded,
rājā Parīkṣit vanished.

10 After the ritual bath,
king Janamejaya
said to the Yāyāvara Brahmin Āstīka,
son of Jaratkāru:

[XV:35:11-17]

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11 "Vivid and wonderful is my yajña,
O Āstīka! –
I have seen my father,
my grief is gone!"

12 "O finest of the Kaurava clan!"
said Āstīka.
"He has conquered both the worlds
whose yajña is blessed
by the presence of Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,
the tapasyā-rich *purāṇa* ṛṣi."

13 O descendant of the Pāṇḍavas!
You have listened
to this wonderful, edifying narrative.
The snakes have perished
in the fire and attained the state
reached by your father.

14 Your steadfastness in truth, O earth-lord,
has indeed saved Takṣaka.
The ṛṣis have received pūjā-respect.
Mahātmā Vyāsa
has demonstrated before your eyes
his marvellous powers.

15 You have listened
to this defect-destroying narrative
and acquired an abundance of dharma.
The knots that stifled your heart
have been loosened by your darshan
of such noble-minded men.

16 Let us offer our namaskāras
to all who side with dharma,
who delight in good conduct,
whose presence dispels defects.

17 Rājā Janamejaya heard these words
from the excellent twice-born
(continued Sauti), and repeatedly pūjā-respected
all the ṛṣis and munis.

18 Wise-in-dharma, he asked Vaiśampāyana,
the ṛṣi of undiminishing glory,
to tell him more
about the *vana-vāsa* of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 "Lord of men," asked Janamejaya,
"what did rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and Yudhiṣṭhira do after meeting
their sons, grandsons and other relatives?"

2 O king! After that maha-marvellous darshan
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
of his sons, rāja-ṛṣi Dhṛtarāṣṭra, grief-dispelled,
returned to his āshram.

3 The others, including the supreme ṛṣis,
with the permission of Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
went back also
to their respective abodes.

4 The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas, however,
with their wives, and their soldiers,
accompanied the mahātmā earth-lord
to his āshram.

5 There, pūjā-respected-by-the-world,
the wise mahā-ṛṣi –
the son of Satyavatī, muni Vyāsa –
said to Dhṛtarāṣṭra:

6 "O mahā-muscled Dhṛtarāṣṭra!
O Kaurava descendant!
Listen to what I have to say.
You have heard –
from profoundly knowledgeable ṛṣis,
pure karma performers,

7 Ṛṣis gifted with abundance of śraddhā,
wise-in-the-Vedas-and-Vedāṅgas,
ancient-purāṅa ṛṣis steeped in dharma –
a vivid variety of kathā-stories.

8 Discard the grief gripping your mind.
The wise are not distressed by destiny.
Deva-ṛṣi Nārada has revealed to you
the secrets of the gods.

9 Following Kṣatriya-dharma,
your sons have attained
the auspicious fulfilment
of a weapons-sanctified death
on the field of battle.
You have seen them
roaming freely like gods
in the realm of heaven.

10 Intelligent Yudhiṣṭhira, his brothers,
and their wives
are solicitously engaged
in serving you.

11 Give them leave to go.
Let them return to their kingdom.
We have passed over a month
in this forest.

12 O enhancer of Kaurava glory!
O lord of men!
A kingdom has many enemies.
It needs to be protected."

13 This advice of Vyāsa
of incomparable energy
inspired the eloquent Kaurava rājā
to tell Yudhiṣṭhira:

14 "*Ajātaśatru*! Foe-less one!
Bhadramṁte! May you prosper!
I say this to you and your brothers.
O lord of the earth!
By your grace,
my grief has been dispelled.

15 My son, I am as happy here
as I was in the Elephant City.
O learned one!
Receiving your loving care,

16 I bask in the fruitful joy
of a son-served father.
O my son!
O mahā-muscled one!
I have no complaints.
You can leave now. Do not delay.

17 The longer you stay here,
the more my tapasyā gets affected.
I had resigned my body to tapasyā;
seeing you makes me too conscious of it.

18 My son! They do not have long to live,
both your mothers
who have taken the same vows as mine,
and who subsist on fallen tree-leaves.

19 Because you were present here,
and with the help
of Vyāsa's virile tapasyā,
we were graced with a vision
of Duryodhana and others
in the other world.

20 O defectless one!
I have made up my mind:
I will practise the severest tapasyā.
Permit me to do so.

21 O mahā-muscled one!
You are now responsible
for the performance of *piṇḍa*-obsequies,
the dignity and honour of our dynasty.
Go today – or tomorrow – my son,
but do not delay.

22 O bull-brave Bharata!
Vibho! Radiant one!
You have heard much
about *rāja-nīti* politics.
I have no new advice to give.
You have done enough for me."

23 To these words of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
king Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"You are wise in dharma.
Do not order me to leave.
I have done no wrong.

24 Give them leave to go, my brothers –
if they like.
I have vowed to serve you
and both my mothers."

25 Gāndhārī then said to him:
"Listen to me, my son.
The *piṇḍa*-offering of your father-in-law
is your responsibility.
The fate of the Kuru family
is in your hands.

26 Go, my son. We have received
abundant pūjā-respect from you.
Do what the rājā says.
A son should obey his father."

27 Yudhiṣṭhira heard what Gāndhārī said.
Turning to loving Kuntī,
who was wiping her tear-filled eyes,
he said:

28 "Mother! The rājā rejects me.
So does illustrious Gāndhārī.
But my heart is with you.
It grieves me to leave you.

29 Dharma-*cāriṇī*! Lady of dharma!
I do not want to obstruct your tapasyā.
There is nothing higher than tapasyā.
Tapasyā brings mahā-fulfilment.

30 Rānī, no more does my mind
care for a kingdom.
The delight of my ātman now
is the practice of tapasyā.

31 Auspicious lady!
Hollow is this earth now,
devoid of delight.
Kinsmen dead, strength sapped.

32 There are no Pāñcālas left.
Only the name Pāñcāla.
Auspicious lady! *Śubhe*!
I can see no one now
who can continue
the Pāñcāla line.

33 Droṇa reduced them to ashes
on the battlefield.
The few who survived were butchered
at night by Droṇa's son.

34 The Cedis whom we knew,
and the Matsyas – are no more.
Only a few Vṛṣṇis remain,
saved by Vāsudeva-Krishna.

35 Seeing the Vṛṣṇis revives in me
a flicker of hope.
The wealth I seek now is dharma,
the other wealth I reject.
Look kindly on all of us,
who will be deprived of your darshan.

36 The rājā will now proceed
with the severest of tapasyās."
Hearing this, mahā-muscled
lord-of-the-battlefield Sahadeva,

37 His eyes brimming with tears,
said to Yudhiṣṭhira:
"O bull-brave Bharata!
I do not have the courage
to leave mother
and go with you.

38 *Vibho*! Radiant one!
I suggest you return,
and I practise tapasyā here.
Emaciated by my tapasyā,

39 I will happily serve at the feet
of the rājā and our mothers."
Embracing strong-armed Sahadeva,
Kuntī said:

40 "Go, my son. Do not say no.
Do what I tell you.
Go, all of you. Be at peace.
Be happy, my sons.

41 Your staying here
will hinder our tapasyā.
My love for you is deep,
it will get in the way of tapasyā.

42 Which is why you must go, my son,
Prabhu! O my lordly son!
We have only a few years left."
These and other assurances by Kuntī
were the way
she restored fortitude,

43 O Indra-among-rājās,
in Sahadeva and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
With the permission of their mother
and rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the bull-brave Kauravas

44 Respectfully approached
finest-of-Kurus Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
Yudhiṣṭhira said: "Happily blessed by you,
we will return to the capital of the kingdom,

45 Leaving this place, O rājā,
cleansed of our defects."
Rājā-ṛṣi Dhṛtarāṣṭra
heard dharmarāja mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira;

46 He blessed Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira,
and gave him leave to depart.
After this, earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra
comforted strongest-of-the-strong Bhīma,

47 And valiant and wise Bhīma
accepted the consolation.
Embracing Arjuna and the bull-brave twins
Nakula and Sahadeva,

48 Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra blessed them
and gave them permission to leave.
The Pāṇḍavas touched the feet of Gāndhārī
and received her permission also.

49 Their mother Kuntī embraced them,
and smelt their heads.
They circumambulated the king
in respectful *pradakṣiṇa*,
like calves prevented from of suckling
circling a mother-cow.

50 Again and again they kept moving
in *pradakṣiṇa* around him.
Draupadī led the other ladies
of the Kaurava family,

51 And offered their adoring respect
to their father-in-law,
as ordained by tradition.
The mothers-in-law embraced each of them,

52 And advised them of their duties.
Then they left, with their husbands.
Then rose the clamour of the sūtas:
"Yoke the chariots! Yoke the chariots!"

53 And there was the neighing of horses
and camels hooting,
and rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
with the wives and kinsmen
and the soldiers accompanying him
departed for Hastināpura.

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Two years after the return of Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
one day deva-ṛṣi Nārada met Yudhiṣṭhira
in the course of his wanderings.

2 Mahā-muscled Kuru-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
finest of eloquent speakers,
welcomed him respectfully, and offered him a seat.
Nārada rested; and Yudhiṣṭhira said:

3 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!
It is long since I last saw you.
Are you keeping well, O Brahmin?
Is everything auspicious with you?

4 Which lands have you been visiting?
What can I do for you?
You are the finest of the twice-born,
you are our supreme refuge."

5 "It is long indeed since I saw you,"
replied Nārada,
"so I come to you, O king,
from my forest-of-tapasyā,
passing through many *tīrthas*
including the river Gaṅgā."

6 "People dwelling on the banks of the Gaṅgā,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"report that mahātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is engaged there in severe tapasyā.

7 Did you meet him there? Is he well,
the enhancer-of-our-Kaurava glory?
And Gāndhārī? and Pṛthā-Kuntī?
and Sūta-putra Sañjaya?

8 How is my earth-lord *pitā*,
O *bhagavan*, revered one?
If you have met the king,
I would like to know."

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9 "Listen calmly, mahārāja,"
replied Nārada,
"to what I heard and saw
in that *tapovana.*

10 O delighter of the Kauravas!
After you returned,
your *pitā*, O king, went from Kurukṣetra
to Gaṅgā-dvāra.

11 The wise monarch took the sacred fire
and the *yājaka*-priests with him,
and Gāndhārī, his daughter-in-law Kuntī,
and the Sūta Sañjaya.

12 Your rich-in-tapasyā *pitā*-ancestor
practised severe tapasyā there,
rolling pebbles in his mouth,
feeding on our, and vowed to silence.

13 All the munis pūjā-respected him.
That king of mahā-tapasyā,
in no more than six months,
was reduced to skin-and-bones.

14 Gāndhārī subsisted only on water,
and Kuntī ate once a month;
and Sañjaya, O Bharata descendant,
ate every third day in the evening.

15 *Prabhu*-lord! The *yajāka*-priests lit
and worshipped the sacred fire.
They saw the king there sometimes,
and at other times he was nowhere.

16 The rājā was never in one place,
he kept roaming in the forest.
The two devī-queens and Sañjaya
followed him everywhere.

17 Sañjaya helped the king along
on lowland and upland.
Blameless Pṛthā-Kuntī
served as the eyes of Gāndhārī.

18 One day that finest of monarchs,
wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
after bathing in the sacred-Gaṅgā,
was returning to the āshram

19 When a storm suddenly sprang up.
A mahā-forest-fire
blazed around him,
consuming everything in its path.

20 Herds of deer and other beasts perished,
snakes sizzled into ashes.
Wild boar scampered for shelter
in bogs and water-bodies.

21 O rājā! Ringed by that conflagration,
they panicked.
Fasting had weakened them,
imparing their *prāṇa*-power.

22 Both your mother and the king
were unable to escape.
Feeling the blaze sweeping towards them,
the king,

23 That most-victorious-of-victory-winners,
said to the Sūta Sañjaya:
"Run, Sañjaya, to a spot
where the fire cannot reach you.

24 We will find our supreme fulfilment
here, in the blazzing fire."
Finest-of-eloquent-speakers Sañjaya,
anguished, replied:

25 "It is not proper for you
to perish in an unsacred fire.
But neither do I see
any escape from this blaze.

26 Tell me: what should I do?
Advise me!"
To Sañjaya's plea
the earth-lord replied:

27 “Nothing improper in this death.
We have left our homes.
We have left off water
and fire and air –

28 Such a death is recommended
for all who practise tapasyā.
Run, Sañjaya! Don’t delay!”
Saying this to Sañjaya,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra focused
his mind in *samādhi.*

29 Facing east, he sat down.
So did Gāndhārī and Kuntī.
Seeing this, Sañjaya respectfully
half-circled them in *pradakṣiṇā.*

30 Profoundly wise Sañjaya said:
“*Prabhu*-lord!
Immerse your ātman in yoga!”
Ṛṣi Vyāsa’s son,
supremely wise rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
did as requested.

31 Like a log of wood he sat there,
concentrating his senses.
Mahā-fortune-favoured Gāndhārī,
your mother Pṛthā-Kuntī,

32 And your *pitā* rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra–
all immersed in yogic union –
were consumed by the forest-fire.
Mahā-minister Sañjaya survived.

33 I saw Sañjaya on a bank of the Gaṅgā,
surrounded by tapasyā-devotees.
Then and there energetic Sañjaya
gave them the news,

34 After which, supremely wise Sañjaya
went to the Himavant mountains.
This was how he passed away,
the mahā-minded Kuru-rājā,

35 With your mothers Gāndhārī and Pṛthā-Kuntī,
O lord of the world.
In the course of my wanderings,
I came across the rājā's corpse

36 And the corpses of both devīs,
O Bharata descendant.
Many rich-in-tapasyā ascetics
came to the *tapovana*

37 When they heard of the passing-away
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
but they did not grieve over his death,
taking it as a supreme fulfilment.
O finest-of-all-men!
All the happenings in the āshram

38 I have narrated, O Pāṇḍava –
including the death-by-fire
of the rājā and the two devīs.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Do not grieve over the deaths
of the earth-lord Dhṛtarāṣṭra,

39 Gāndhārī and your mother.
They chose their death-by-fire."
Listening to this (continued Vaiśampāyana)
the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,

40 Agitated by Dhṛtarāṣṭra's passing away,
were afflicted by mahā-grief.
Sounds of mahā-lamentation
emanated from the inner apartments.

41 News of the rājā's death, mahārāja,
made the citizens break into grief.
"Aho! *Dhik*! Shame! Shame!"
exclaimed agonising rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

42 He raised his arms high,
and wept, remembering his mother.
Bhīma and the other brothers
also wept.

43 When they heard of the passing away
of Pṛthā-Kuntī,
the ladies of the inner apartments,
mahārāja, were mahā-grieved.

44 The people mourned the death-by-fire
of the son-less earth-lord
and the simultaneous death
of tapasyā-practicing Gāndhārī.

45 And when the wailing briefly stopped,
O Bharata,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira with great fortitude
controlled his tears.

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 "What a terrible way to die!"
exclaimed Yudhiṣṭhira.
"For a mahātmā like him,
engaged in severe tapasyā,
to die neglected by his relatives –
so many of them!

2 If you ask me, O Brahmin,
I am forced to say
that how human beings pass away
is hard to foresee.
Can you imagine Vicitravīrya's son
getting burnt to death?

3 That a rājā with a hundred sons,
all muscular, all glorious,
a thousand-elephant-strong rāja –
should perish in a forest-fire!

4 Soothed at one time by palm-leaf fans
in the hands lovely girls –
consumed in a forest-fire now,
a fire fanned by the wings of vultures!

5 Woken at one time by the chants
of sūtas and *magadha*-singers –
that king sprawls on the bare earth –
the consequence of my wicked karma!

6 My grief is not for illustrious Gāndhārī,
though she has lost her hundred sons.
That husband-vowed lady has attained
the realm attained by her husband.

7 I grieve deeply for Pṛthā-Kuntī,
who left the glory
and mahā-prosperity of her sons
to live in the forest.

8 *Dhik*! Shame on our kingdom!
Dhik! Our strength! *Dhik*! Our valour!
Dhik! Shame on Kṣatriya-dharma!
What are we but walking corpses?

9 O most excellent of the twice-born!
Subtle are the ways of Kāla!
What made Kuntī give up royal luxury
and go to *vana-vāsa*?

10 I am completely mystified –
how could the mother
of Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, and Vijaya-Arjuna
perish helpless in a forest-fire?

11 What was the point of Savyasācī-Arjuna
gratifying the fire-god
in the Khāṇḍava forest?
If you ask me,
is this the way for the god of fire
to show his gratitude?

12 How dare Bhagavān Agni
consume to death
the mother of Savyasācī-Arjuna!
Disguised as a Brahmin,
he approached Arjuna once,
begging for favours.

13 *Dhik!* Shame on Agni!
Dhik! Shame on the truth
of Pārtha-Arjuna's so-called promises!
Bhagavan! Revered one
An even greater agony
afflicts me –

14 Lord-of-the-earth Dhṛtarāṣṭra
perished in an unsacred fire.
How could that Kaurava,
that rāja-ṛṣi of tapasyā,

15 Who ruled the entire earth,
succumb to such a death?
There were many mantra-purified fires
in that mahā-forest –

16 Why did my father perish
in an unsacred fire?
Skin-and-bones Pṛthā-Kuntī
must have shuddered and cried:

17 'Hari! *Tāta*! Dear Dharmarāja!'
in the terror of her mahā-trauma.
'Save me, Bhīma! Save me!'
Shrieking out her fear,

18 My mother must have perished
in that fierce forest-fire.
Sahadeva was the son
she loved most,

19 And that valiant son of Mādravatī
was not there to save her."
Moved to tears by these laments,
the people embraced each other.

20 So anguished were the five Pāṇḍavas,
you would think
the doom of total dissolution
of the end of a yuga
had descended on them.
Those Indras-among-men
lamented copiously and unashamedly.

21 Their piercing grief
passed through the palace walls
and pulsated the sky.

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 "O true-vowed one!" said Nārada.
"The king did not perish in an unsacred fire.
Let me tell you what I have heard
about Vaicitravīrya-Dhṛtarāṣṭra's death.

2 What I have heard is
that when the wise king,
who subsisted on air,
entered the forest,
he ordered the *iṣṭi*-fires lit
and then abandoned them.

3 The *yājaka*-priests accompanying him
left the fires
in an unpeopled part of the forest,
O excellent Bharata,
and went about
performing their other duties.

4 The conflagration that flamed in the forest
was ignited
by these sacred fires – so I was informed
by the tapasyā-performers there.

5 O bull-brave Bharata!
I have told you already
about rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.
The fire which consumed him –
that fire was the result
of his own sacred fire.

6 O defectless one! Yudhiṣṭhira!
The munis told me this.
I met them on the banks
of the Bhāgīrathī-Gaṅgā.

7 O lord of the earth!
Rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra perished
in his own fire.
Do not grieve over him.
The king has attained
the supreme goal.

8 O lord of men!
There is no doubt at all
that by her perfect service
to her guru-elders
your mother has attained
a mahā-fulfilment.

9 O Indra-among-rājās!
It is proper for you now
to perform their water-obsequies,
together with your brothers.
You should start preparing
for the *kriyā*."

10 The lord of the earth
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the bull-brave upholder
of the responsibilities of the Pāṇḍavas,
Yudhiṣṭhira emerged from the palace
with his brothers and the ladies.

11 Inspired by rājā-bhakti,
the citizens of the capital
followed them to the banks
of the Gaṅgā.
Each of them wore
a single unstitched dress.

12 Those bull-brave men
bathed in the sacred waters.
Placing Yuyutsu at their head,
they offered water-oblations
as tokens of their reverence
for mahātmā Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

13 Oblations were offered as ordained
to Gāndhārī and Pṛthā-Kuntī,
and their family-*gotras* named.
After the performance of the rites
that cleanse the living of impurities,
they returned, but stayed outside the city.

14 People proficient in death-rituals
were despatched to Gaṅgā-dvāra
by finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira
where the king died in the fire,

15 With instructions to perform
all the ordained rituals at Gaṅgā-dvāra,
after which the earth-lord
offered them suitable gifts.

16 On the twelfth day of the ritual,
the earth-lord
offered lavish sums of *dakṣiṇā*-
of the *śrāddha* ceremony.

17 Gifting gold, silver, cattle and beds
in reverence to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
naming Gāndhārī and Pṛthā-Kuntī,
the energetic rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,

18 One by one, offered valuable gifts
to the deserving.
Each of the recipients
was identified individually,

19 And each received as much
as each desired:
beds, edibles, carriages,
jewels, gems, money.

20 For the sake of his two mothers,
earth-lord rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was more than generous
with gifts of food
and dresses and bed-spreads
and ornamented slave-girls.

21 The earth-lord rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
having gifted munificently
at the *śrāddha*-ceremony
then entered the Elephant-city.

22 The men who were despatched
by rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
returned after collecting
the *kulyāni*-bones of the deceased.

23 Offering their respects as ordained,
with flower-garlands and perfumes,
they informed earth-lord Yudhiṣṭhira
of the completion of the ceremony.

24 Then, O rājā,
the supreme ṛṣi Narada
consoled dharmātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and returned to his abode.

25 After three years of forest-life
and fifteen in the city,
wise Dhṛtarāṣṭra
departed from this world,

26 After losing all his sons
on the battlefield,
after giving away lavishly
in charity
for his relatives, friends,
brothers, and followers.

27 Without his relatives and friends,
king Yudhiṣṭhira,
afflicted with mental unease,
ruled the kingdom, somehow.

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

VOWELS

Guttural	अ	आ
	a	ā
Palatal	इ	ई
	i	ī
Labial	उ	ऊ
	u	ū
Dental	ऋ	
	ṛ	
Guttural-Palatal	ए	ऐ
	e	ei
Guttural-Labial	ओ	औ
	o	au

CONSONANTS

Guttural	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvāra = ṁ

C O N T E N T S

CANTO XV

Āsramāvasikaparva

The Book of Renouncement

xvii) Pāṇḍavanan *Dhṛtarāṣṭrasramagamanaṃ*: The visit by the Pāṇḍavas to the hermitage of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra.*

xviii) *Pāṇḍavavarṇanaṃ*: An introduction to the *Pāṇḍava* family.

xix) *Vidurasayujyanaṃ*: The absorption of *Vidura* and the transference of *Dharma* into *Yudhiṣṭhira.*

xx) Vyāsāgamanaṃ: The arrival of *Vyāsa.*

xxi) *Vyāsavākyaṃ*: A discourse by *Vyāsa.*

Chapter 91 *Putradarśanaparva(n)* (Chap. 96 Cal. Ed.): Relating to the temporary re-animation of the dead warriors.

i) *Karṇajanmakathanaṃ*: History of the birth of *Karṇa.*

ii) *Duryadhanadidarśanaṃ*: Re-animation of *Duryodhana* and other dead warriors by the grace of *Vyāsa* for a temporary period.

iii) *Vaiśampāyanavākyaṃ*: A discourse by *Vaiśampāyana.*

iv) *Janamejayasya Pariddarśanaṃ*: Re-animation of *Parikṣita.*

v) *Yudhiṣṭhirānivartanaṃ*: Return of *Yudhiṣṭhira.*

Chapter 92 *Nāradagamanaparava(n)* (Chap. 97 Cal. Ed.): Relating to the arrival of *Nārada.* Sec. 45–47 [Cr.Ed.]; 37–39 (Cal. Ed.)

i) *Dhṛtarāṣṭradinān Dāvāgnau Dāhaḥ*: The death of *Dhṛtarāṣṭra Gāndhārī* and *Kuntī* in a forest-fire.

ii) *Yudhiṣṭhiraśokaḥ*: Mourning of *Yudhiṣṭhira.*

iii) *Dhṛtarāṣṭra Śrāddhakaraṇaṃ*: Obsequies and offering for *Dhṛtarāṣṭra.*

Courtesy:

Madhusraba Dasgupta

Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata

(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)

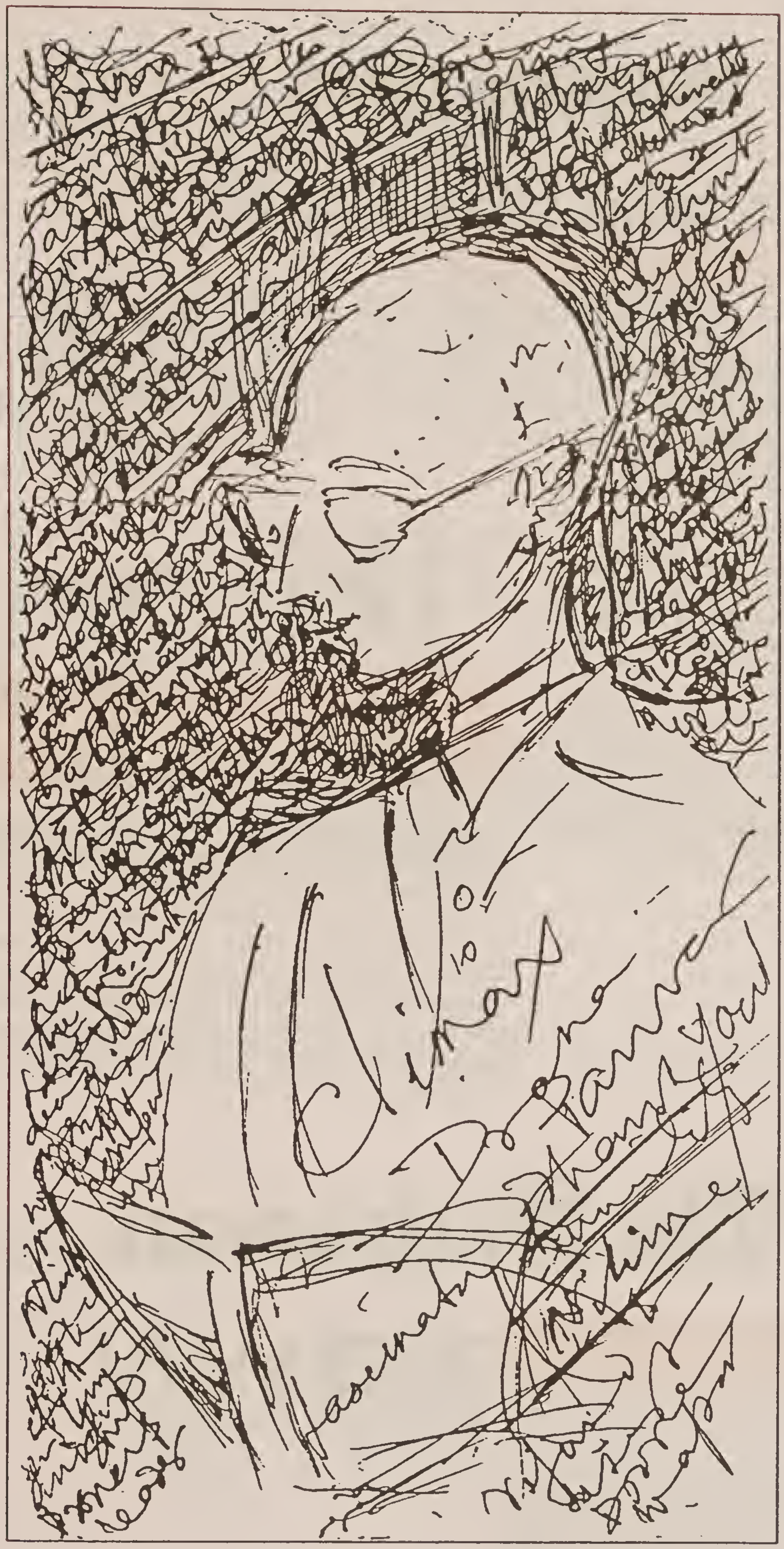
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Book 6 : The Bhīṣma Parva (2006)
Book 7 : The Droṇa Parva (2007)
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Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā



P. Lāl reading the 334th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata on 2 July 2006 at G. D. Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

[*Sketch by Nilima Sen-Gangopadhyay*]

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Kolkata Calendar

READING SESSION

GD Birla Sabhagar
Professor P Lal reads Sanjaya's report to Raja Dhritarastra of a renewed battle between Karna and Bhima on Kuruksetra, Asvatthaman's defeat in a skirmish with Arjuna, and the virulent mutual abuse showered by the two brothers Bhima and Karna before a fierce combat, in the 358th weekly Sunday session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreatior by Vyasa's complete *Mahabharat*, presented by Sanskriti Sagar, on January 21, at 11 am.

2 | 2 The Telegraph

What's on in town

READING

February 18 at G.D. Birla Sabhagar; 11 am: Professor P. Lal reads Sanjaya's report of Arjuna slaying Jayadratha helped by Krishna's *maya*-manoeuvre to shroud the sunset, and depositing his decapitated head in Brihadksatra's lap by Gandiva-wielding skill, in the 362nd weekly session of his sloka-by-sloka English transcreation of Vyasa's *Mahabharata*.

The Statesman

AROUND TOWN

PROFESSOR P Lal reads Bhima defeating Kama in two battles on Kuruksetra in the 356th session of his English transcreation of Vyasa's Mahabharata at GD Birla Sabhaghar at 11 a.m. on 7 January.

The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

TRANSCREATED BY P. LAL

The Mahabharata

OF VYASA

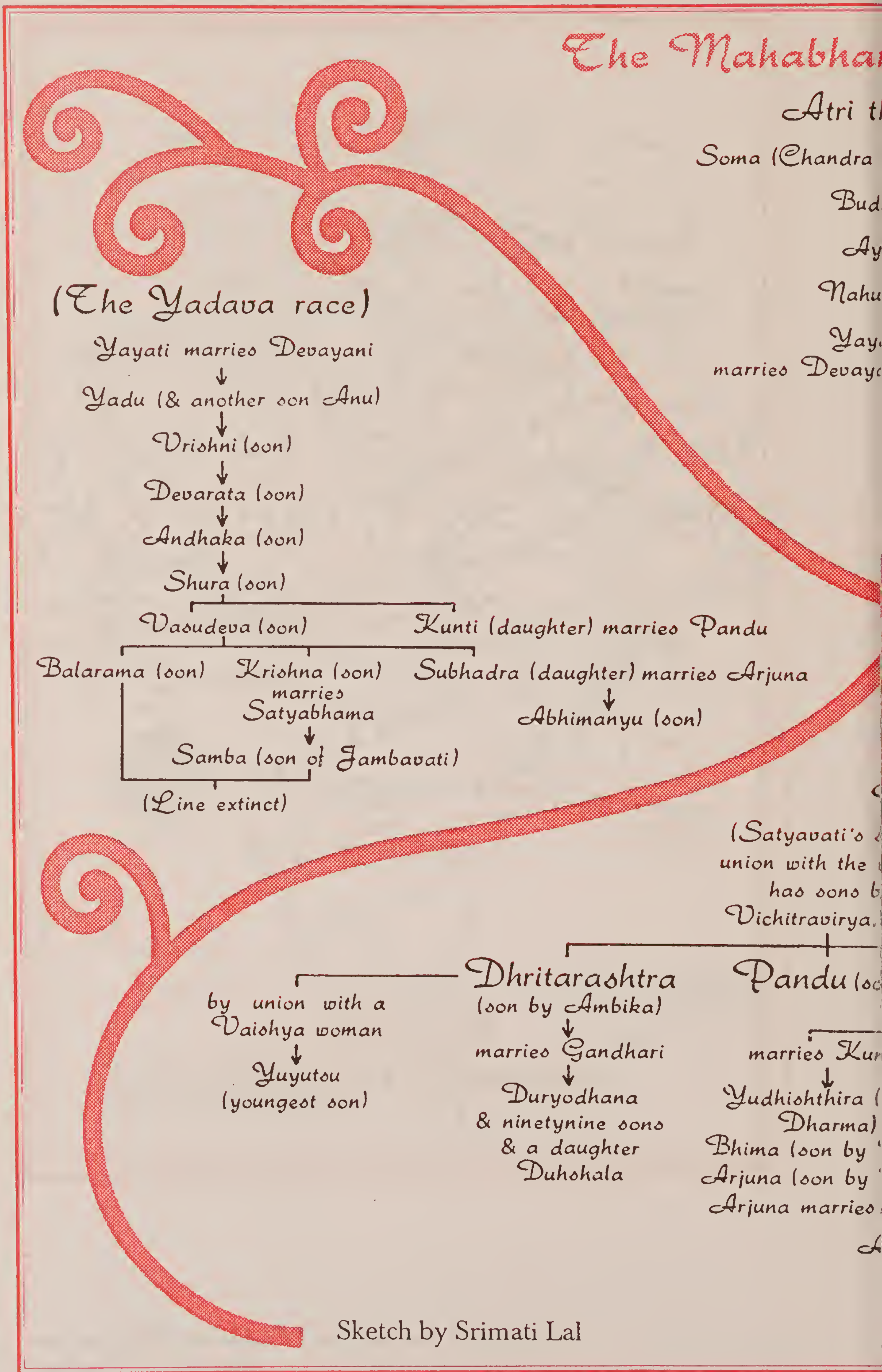
The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.



Sketch by P. Lal



Sketch by P. Lal based on *The Historical Atlas of South Asia*
[University of Minnesota]



Sketch by Srimati Lal

Family Tree

ishi

u) the Moon

)

n)

)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha
↓
Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)
↓
Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala
↓
Bharata (son)
↓
Hastin (son)
↓
Kuru (son)
↓
Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

e-marriage union with Ganga
↓
Bhishma (son)

sa
her pre-marriage
arashara: Vyasa
wo widows of
ka & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

mbalika)

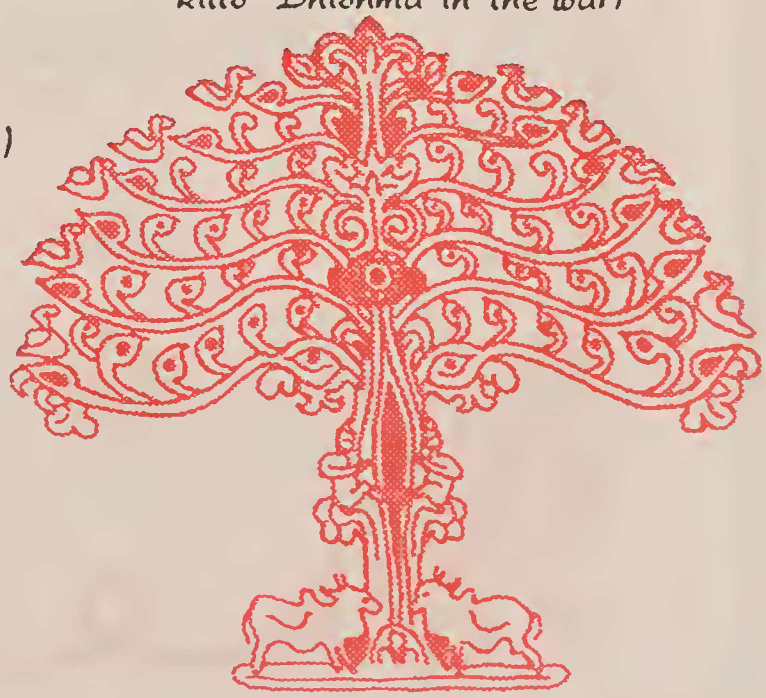
Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

ind

Madri
↓
Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

dra

iyu (son) marries Uttara
↓
Parikshit (son)
↓
Janamejaya (son)



The Mahabharata of Vyasa

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& Transcreated into English
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Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2007. I am three score and nineteen. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3200 separate titles in its checklist (published over 49 years 1958-2007), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

For more information, browse in the WW IndEngLit Website: www.writersworkshopindia.com

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